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EXTRACTS

FROM

THE WRITINGS

OF

FRANCIS FENELON,

ARCHBISHOP OF CAMBRAY.

WITH

SOME MEMOIRS OF HIS LIFE.

TO WHICH ARE ADDED

LETTERS,

EXPRESSIVE OF

LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP.

THE WRITER NOT KNOWN.

Recommended to the Perusal and Notice of the Religiously disposed.

THE SECOND EDITION.

By JOHN KENDALL.

LONDON:

PRINTED AND SOLD BY

PHILLIPS AND FARDON,

GEORGE YARD,

LOMBARD STREET.

1805.

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PREFACE.

THE EDITOR of the following Abſtract met with ſo much inſtruction in reading the Archbiſhop of Cambray's writings, as to incline him to ſelect certain parts of them, with a view to his own profit in ſome future time; and having proceeded further in it than he at firſt expected, concludes to publiſh them in a ſmall volume for the benefit of others.

AND as this may come into the hands of ſome who have not had opportunity of knowing much concerning this good man, the following ſhort memoirs of his life, are added, written ſoon after his death, by one of his intimate acquaintance.

WHEN he accepted the Archbiſhoprick of Cambray, he reſigned the Abby of St. Vallery, which had been given to him by the King, without aſking it for any of his friends; the King wondered at it, and preſſed him to keep it; but he repreſented that the revenues of the biſhoprick being more than ſufficient, he thought himſelf in that caſe wherein the canons forbid pluralities of benefices. He relinquiſhed, at the ſame time, the priory, which he had from his uncle. So rare a diſintereſtedneſs gained him great reſpect, but it alſo occaſioned a certain grudge againſt him, in thoſe perſons whom his example condemned. This was about the year 1695.

THE high favour he was now in ſeemed to promiſe a greater advancement; but there aroſe

10207

a ſtorm againſt him, which carried him for ever from the court. He became acquainted with Madam Guyon, a religious and virtuous woman; for whom he had conceived a favourable opinion, and refuſed to condemn her writings, as was deſired of him.* This gave offence to ſome of his former friends, and he was repreſented as an obſtinate man, incapable of ſubmiſſion to the judgment of his brother prelates. They were further diſpleaſed with a book he had written to explain his ſentiments more fully; and with theſe impreſſions the king was induced to confine him in his dioceſe, and to deprive his relations of their employments, and baniſh his friends from court. His good underſtanding, and the purity of his life, were no longer conſidered: his friend was to paſs for a whimſical enthuſiaſtical woman; and himſelf for the promoter of a ſenſeleſs and profane ſect.

Thus confined to his dioceſe, he there enjoyed that peace of mind which never fails to accompany pure virtue. He applied himſelf to make men good and happy, by diſcharging, with great care, all the functions of his epiſcopal

* This excellent woman was much perſecuted by ſome of the Biſhops, and at length impriſoned; where ſhe remained ſome years ſick, and in a ſuffering condition. She often requeſted that her crime might be ſpecified, and proved:—but her enemies not being able to make any thing appear againſt her, ſhe was at length diſcharged out of cuſtody, and exiled to Blois, where ſhe lived near twelve years, honoured and reſpected, for her good underſtanding, ſincere piety, pure and modeſt virtue; even by thoſe who had the ſtrongeſt prejudices againſt her.

character, he assisted at the examinations of persons who were about to be appointed to the ministerial office, and had conferences with them every week upon the principles of religion, in which he listened to their enquiries with great patience, and gave his answers with a fatherly goodness.

NOTWITHSTANDING the disorders occasioned by the war, he was very assiduous in the visitation of his diocese, and preached in every church. All his sermons came from the abundance of his heart, without being written down. In these publick discourses love was the great point in which he made every thing terminate; but it was such a love as produces and perfects all the Christian virtues. He avoided all refined ideas, and superfluous ornaments, which are contrary to the simplicity of the gospel: and sought only to speak as becomes a good father, so as to comfort, relieve, and enlighten his flock. In considering the affairs of the diocese, he never took advantage from his rank, or his talents to decide in any matter by his authority alone, without persuasion. 'The shepherd,' he used to say, 'has yet more need of being 'docile than the flock: he must be continually 'learning, that he may be able to teach, and 'must oftentimes obey, in order to govern 'well. The wise man increases his own wisdom 'by that which he gathers from another.'

THE Bishop's practice was agreeable to his doctrine, severe to himself: he did not, however, affect an austere air, but was cheerful in

all his deportment. He ſlept little, and was very moderate in his diet: and allowed himſelf no pleaſure, but what is found in filling up his duty. His chief recreation was to take the air; and when he went thus abroad, he ſpent the time either in uſeful converſation with his friends, or in ſeeking ſome occaſion to do good to the people. If he met with any of the peaſants in his way, he would aſk them queſtions about the ſtate of their family, and gave them advice how to regulate their little affairs, and to lead a religious life. Sometimes he went into their cottages to ſpeak to them of God; and to comfort them under the hardſhips they endured. He became, in a manner, one of them, through the tenderneſs of a heart deeply affected with the love of a Saviour, who was poor.

Poor himſelf, in the midſt of plenty, he gave almoſt all his revenue away to hoſpitals; young clergymen, who he educated; decayed gentlemen; and perſons of all ranks, and of different nations, who, during the time of war, were within the reach of his generoſity.

But theſe things, which were generally admired in him, were nothing in compariſon of that divine life, by which he walked with God, like Enoch, and was unknown to men. It is, however, Chriſtianity alone which can raiſe to that peace of the Holy Spirit, and inward tranquility, which excludes not only unprofitable actions, but even uſeleſs thoughts. This internal quietude he endeavoured to attain, while he was outwardly employed in performing the

duties of humanity, religion, and his vocation. The piety he taught was far from leading to a refined deism, and an independance on all visible authority; as his adversaries insinuated, it furnished, on the contrary, the most solid proof of true Christianity. His thoughts concerning the state of man by nature, are, that he is born diseased, but that the remedy is ever at hand to cure him. The light, which enlightens every man that comes into the world, is never wanting. Every man shall be judged by the law which he has known, and not by that which he has not. No one shall be condemned, but for neglecting to profit by what he knew: the religion of Christ consists in charity. The ceremonies and priesthood are but salutary aid to succour our weakness; outward and sensible signs to increase in ourselves and others the knowledge and love of our common father. Very soon these means shall cease, the shadows shall disappear, and the true temple be opened.

Jesus Christ has taught us to look upon this life, this short moment of our banishment, here below, as the infancy of our being, and as an obscure night, in which all the pleasures we meet with are but transient dreams; and all the evils we feel but wholesome bitters, to wean us from the love of this world, and make us press forward to our true and native country. Penetrated with a sense of our nothingness, our inability, and blindness, he would have us present ourselves before him, the Being of beings; that he may impress his image upon our souls;

enlighten and animate us; and thereby produce in us the choiceſt virtues, till at length being made wholly conformable to him, he ſhall conſummate us in his divine fellowſhip. This is that worſhip in Spirit and in Truth, of which the goſpel ſpeaks.

THUS the Archbiſhop expreſſes himſelf in ſome of his writings, which ſhews the good diſpoſition of his mind. In the latter years of his life he had an opportunity of manifeſting his love for his country, and for ſtrangers, in an eminent manner. The war drawing near to Cambray, he became the admiration of the army, by his charity for the ſick and wounded, and by the hoſpitality of his houſe. His charity went ſo far as to hire houſes for the reception of the diſtreſſed. Such an expenſe might be thought exceſſive, at a time when his revenues were much leſſened by the neighbourhood of the army; but the wants of the diſtreſſed were the meaſure of his liberality. His houſe was open, not only to perſons of diſtinction, but was a place of refuge to the pooreſt people. The ſudden motions of the armies, and the diſorders that attended them, obliged ſometimes whole villages to ſeek that ſafety in the town, which was not to be found in the open country. As many as could be conveniently were lodged in his houſe: and neither the painful ſight of the condition of ſome, nor the infectious diſorders attending others, could abate his zeal. He walked up and down among them, like a good father, ſhewing, by his ſighs, how much his

heart was moved with compaſſion. His preſence and words tended to alleviate their diſtreſs.

The veneration in which he was held, was not confined to the French army alone. He was no leſs reſpected by the enemy. The Duke of Marlborough, Prince Eugene, and the Duke of Ormond, ſhewed him all ſorts of civilities. They ſent detachments to guard his meadows, and corn; and cauſed his grain to be conveyed to Cambray, leſt it ſhould be carried off by their own forragers. Such a commanding power has true virtue over all hearts. As he was thus loved and reſpected by ſtrangers, ſo he received them with great cordiality, of whatever religion they happened to be. However, he made no other uſe of the eſteem men expreſſed for him, but to do them good. His ſoul was raiſed too high above the objects of human ambition to be dazzled with them.

It is worthy of notice with what facility he ſuffered himſelf to be interrupted in any buſineſs he was about, that he might communicate himſelf to all, and give himſelf up to the diſcharge of thoſe duties which daily, and even hourly, occurred: as it were for the exerciſe of his patience and meekneſs. It was thus that one day being obſtructed in a work he had a mind to finiſh, by one of his friends, who was leaving Cambray, and his friend endeavouring to excuſe the interruption, he replied, "Be in "no concern; you do me more good by in- "terrupting me, than I ſhould have gained by "purſuing what I was about."

However agreeable his converſation was in publick, it was more ſo in private with his friends. Divine love was in him a ſource of the pureſt and moſt generous friendſhip: the ſentiments of his heart are pretty fully deſcribed in a letter he wrote to his pupil, the Duke of Burgundy; an extract of which is as follows:

"Divine love," (he ſays) "is not always "accompanied with a ſenſible fondneſs; but "it is hearty, faithful, conſtant, and effectual. "Love will make us bear every thing, ſuffer "every thing, hope every thing for our friend; "it will ſurmount all uneaſineſſes, it will melt "with compaſſion for the misfortunes of "others: it will weep with thoſe that weep, "and rejoice with thoſe that rejoice. It will "do this, not by a conſtrained outſide ap- "pearance, and a ceremonious complaiſance, "but from the abundance of the heart; in "which Divine love will be a living ſource to "furniſh it with all the ſentiments, and diſpo- "ſitions of the moſt affectionate and ſubſtantial "kindneſs."

He uſed much caution in his conduct, and way of behaviour, towards his friends. He ſaw their faults, and bore with them with great mildneſs and ſweetneſs of temper: waiting for the proper time of ſpeaking, and laid hold of it when it came. He alſo knew how to ſeaſon his advice, in ſuch a manner as that the moſt unpleaſing truths did not give offence.—Divine charity, (he ſays) makes great allow-

ances for the weakneſſes of others; bears with them; and treats them with gentleneſs and condeſcenſion: it is never over haſty in its proceeding: it may be neceſſary to wait long for a favourable opportunity to give one ſingle piece of wholeſome advice; imperfect virtue is captious, cenſorious, ſevere, and implacable; but perfect virtue is uniform, meek, affable, and compaſſionate. "It takes every burthen "upon itſelf, and aims chiefly at doing good. "It is this principle of diſintereſtedneſs, with "regard to ourſelves, and of compaſſion for "others, which is the true bond of ſociety."

THIS ſweet and mild diſpoſition in the Archbiſhop, did not, however, hinder him from ſpeaking the truth to his friends, when he thought it neceſſary; he alſo was deſirous they ſhould uſe the ſame freedom towards him, as appears by the manner of his writing, as follows:

"I REQUEST you, more than ever, not to "ſpare me in telling me my faults, though "you ſhould think you diſcover a fault in me, "which perhaps I have not, the harm will "not be great. If your intimation and advice "offend me, I ſhall thereby ſee that you have "reached the quick; and thus you will ſtill do "me a great benefit, by inuring me to reproof, "and to a Chriſtian lowlineſs of ſpirit. The "higher I am raiſed, by my character, the "more I ought to be humbled. And I hope, "that far from weakening our union, it will "be a means to ſtrengthen it."

NEITHER abſence, nor diſtance, could leſſen

his affection towards his friends, though he had not ſeen them of a long time. In one of his letters, he ſays, " Let us all dwell in our only " centre, where we may continually meet, and " be but one! We are very near, though we " ſee not each other; whereas people, who " are in the ſame houſe, and chamber, may " live at a great diſtance, as to a true fellow- " ſhip: God unites and brings together the " moſt remote points of diſtance, with regard " to thoſe hearts that are united in him!"

THOUGH he was reſigned to the divine will, yet nobody was more ſenſibly touched with the loſs of his friends: true virtue regulates the paſſions without extinguiſhing them, and can reconcile the ſentiments of humanity with thoſe of religion, ſo that the one ſhall not deſtroy the other. He uſed to weep for the death of his friends, without hiding his tears. Yet, in the midſt of his grief, he ſtill preſerved his tranquility, and comforted thoſe who mourned like himſelf, for the loſs ſuſtained.

IN the beginning of the year 1715, he fell ill of an inflammation of his lungs, attended with a fever, which laſted about ſix days, with ſharp pains: during this time he gave all the tokens of truly Chriſtian patience, meekneſs, and conſtancy: in his laſt moments, the only words he uttered, were, *Not my will, but thine, be done.*

IT appeared, after his death, that he had not made it his care to accumulate riches, but died poor; as he had lived, in a great meaſure, without money, and free from debts.

EXTRACTS

FROM THE

WRITINGS OF FENELON,

ARCHBISHOP OF CAMBRAY.

The Neceſſity of knowing and loving God.

WE ſhould conſider that we are nothing of ourſelves; we are only what God made us to be, and only for ſuch time as he pleaſes. He need only withdraw his hand, which ſupports us, to plunge us into the abyſs of our own nothingneſs; as a ſtone, which we hold in the air, falls by its own weight when we no longer hold it. We have not, therefore, being or life, but through the gift of God.

Again there are other bleſſings of a ſtill more pure and elevated kind: a good life is worth more than the life itſelf; virtue is of a greater value than health; rectitude of heart, and the love of God, are as much above any temporal gifts, as the heavens are above the earth. If, therefore, without his help we cannot for one moment poſſeſs thoſe favours ſo

groſs, how much more certainly muſt he give us thoſe ſublime gifts of his love.

O, my God, not to know thee then, is to regard thee as out of us, as an Almighty Being that gives laws to all nature, and has made all things viſible! This is but to know one part of that which thou art, and to be ignorant of that which is moſt wonderful, and moſt concerns thy reaſonable creatures.

That which elevates my ſoul, and inſpires me with hope, is, that thou art the God of my heart; there thou doſt all that pleaſeth thee. When I am good, it is thou that makeſt me ſo: it is thou that animateſt my ſoul, as my ſoul animates my body; thou art more preſent and intimate to me, than I am to myſelf. This ſelf, for which I have ſo much ſenſibility, ought to be a ſtranger in compariſon of thee: it is thou that gaveſt it to me, therefore thou requireſt that I ſhould love thee more than it.

What a comfort it is, O my God, to think that every thing is the work of thy hand, all within and all without me. Thou art always with me. When I do evil, thou art with me, reproaching me for the evil I do, making me regret the good I have omitted, and ſhewing me a mercy which ſtretcheth forth its arms to receive me. When I do good, it is thou inſpireſt me with the deſire of it, and effecteſt it in me; it is thou that inclineſt my heart to love the good, and deteſt the evil; it is thou that ſuffereſt, that entreateſt, that edifieſt my neighbour,

bour, that giveſt alms. I do all theſe things, but it is through thee, who cauſeſt me to do them. Theſe good works, which are thy gifts, become thy works; but they are always thy gifts, and ceaſe to be good works, when I regard them as my own, and when their being thy gift (which alone makes them valuable), eſcapes my ſight.

O, Father of mercy, I will no longer reaſon on thy grace, but ſilently reſign myſelf to it: it does all in man, it is by it that I act, and that I forbear, that I ſuffer, that I believe, that I hope, and that I love. If I obey its influence, it will be all in me; by it I ſhall effect all; it is this that moves the heart, but in the end the heart muſt be moved, and thou doſt not ſave man without his co operation: therefore it is my buſineſs to work without delay, that I may not check that grace which impels me; all the good I have proceeds from it, all the evil from myſelf. When I do good, it is that animates me; when I do evil, it is becauſe I reſiſt it. God would not that I ſhould know more than this, every thing elſe would only ſerve to nouriſh in me a vain curioſity.

When ſhall we love God truly? When ſhall we ſeek him who ſeeks us, and carries us in his arms? In his tender and paternal boſom we forget him; it is the ſweetneſs of his gifts, that prevents our reflecting on the giver: thoſe favours which he is every moment beſtowing upon us, inſtead of melting us into love, only

ſerve to attract our attention from its proper object.

The moſt excellent prayer is nothing elſe but the love of God; its excellency conſiſts not in the multitude of our words, for they are not neceſſary to make known unto God the ſentiments of our hearts.

True prayer then is that of the heart, and the heart can only aſk that which it deſires. To pray then is to deſire, but this deſire muſt be according to the will of God.

They always pray, whoſe hearts always feel true love and deſire. That love which is hidden in the bottom of their ſouls, prays without ceaſing; even while the ſpirit cannot be actually attentive. God ceaſes not to regard in the ſoul that deſire which he forms himſelf, though the ſoul is not always conſcious of it: it is a ſecret voice which perpetually draws down his mercies; it is this ſpirit, which, as St. Paul ſays, *Helpeth our infirmities, and maketh interceſſion for us, with groanings which cannot be uttered.**

This love ſolicits God to give us what we want, to overlook our defects, and regard the ſincerity of our intentions; it blots out our ſmaller offences, and purifies us as a conſuming fire: it prays for us according to the will of God; for we know not what to pray for as we ought, and would often aſk what would prove

* Romans viii. 26.

hurtful

hurtful to us, as certain pious fervours, ſenſible taſtes, and an apparent perfection, which would only ſerve to nouriſh the natural life, and a confidence in our own ſtrength.

When we are buſied in outward things, and the diſcharge of our duty in that ſtate in which Providence has placed us, unavoidably cauſes diſtraction, we nevertheleſs carry within us a fire which never goes out; but, on the contrary, nouriſhes a ſecret prayer, which is a lamp inceſſantly burning before the throne of God; *If we ſleep, our heart waketh.** *Bleſſed are thoſe whom the Lord ſhall find thus waking.*†

To preſerve this ſpirit of prayer, ſo neceſſary to our union with God, we muſt obſerve two principal things; the one is, to endeavour to nouriſh it; the other, to avoid every thing that may deprive us of it.

That which deprives us of the ſpirit of prayer, ought to fill us with terror, and calls for all our caution. Thus we ought to fly thoſe vain companions who diſſipate us too much, thoſe pleaſures which excite the paſſions, every thing that awakens a reliſh for the world, and thoſe old inclinations which have been fatal to us.

Meditation is not prayer, but it is the neceſſary foundation of it. It makes us ſenſible of thoſe truths which God has revealed to us. By meditation, we ſhall learn not only the depth of the myſteries of Chriſtianity, and the

* Cant. v. 3. † Luke xii. 37.

truths of the gospel; but also all that these truths ought to impress upon our minds, in order to our regeneration: these truths ought to be a long time sinking into our hearts, as the dye by degrees tinges the wool that imbibes it.

A man who owes himself to the publick, would offend God, should he think himself in union with him, while he passed that time in meditation and retirement, which was necessary for the discharge of the duties of his employment.

The true union with God, consists in fulfilling his will in the most wearisome and laborious duties of our state, without relaxation, and in opposition to all our natural aversions.

The general cautions against dissipation are, to avoid as much as possible, all connections and intimacy with people whose maxims are in opposition to those of Christianity; especially when these infectious maxims are such, as we have formerly been seduced by. They will easily cause our wounds to bleed afresh, as they have a secret intelligence with the bottom of our hearts, where there is a soft and insinuating counsellor always ready to blind and betray us.

The holy scripture advises us to judge of a man by his * friends. And indeed, how can he who loves God, and desires no longer to

* Eccles. xiii. 20.

love

love any thing, but through him, chooſe for his boſom friends, thoſe who neither love nor know God, and who regard ſuch an affection as a contemptible weakneſs? Can a heart full of God, and that is ſenſible of its own weakneſs, can it ever be at reſt among thoſe whoſe ſentiments never agree with it, and with whom it is in continual danger of loſing all its treaſure? The taſte of ſuch people, and the taſte that faith inſpires, are abſolutely incompatible.

I am very ſenſible there are worldly attachments, which neither can nor ought to be broken. There are friends to whom we are bound by an eſteem for their natural good qualities, by gratitude, by the attachment of a ſincere friendſhip, and laſtly, by the laws of decency, and neceſſary intercourſe. To withdraw entirely our confidence and familiarity from ſuch perſons, would wound them to the heart. But then, without breaking with them, or avowing any coolneſs, there are gentle and imperceptible means of leſſening our intercourſe with them. We may diſtinguiſh them from common acquaintances, converſe with them in private, and open our hearts to them on certain ſubjects, where probity and friendſhip are ſufficient to enable them to give us good advice, and where our ſentiments may agree; though perhaps the very ſame judgment in us, may proceed from motives more pure and elevated than any they are actuated by.

Finally, we may continue to ſerve them with all

all the aſſiduity of the moſt cordial friendſhip, without giving up our hearts to them.

Nothing can be more dangerous than the neglect of ſuch precaution; and if we do not in the beginning exert ourſelves courageouſly to render our piety free and independent of ſuch irreligious friends, it is a piety that threatens approaching ruin. If a man, who is beſet with ſuch friends, is naturally weak, and his paſſions eaſily inflamed, it is certain theſe friends, be they ever ſo ſincere, will draw him back from his devotion. I will ſuppoſe them, if you pleaſe, virtuous, honeſt, full of fidelity, and every thing that conſtitutes friendſhip, in the eyes of the world. Yet all this avails not, nor will it prevent their corrupting him. The more amiable they are, the more they are to be dreaded. As for thoſe who have not theſe amiable qualities, they muſt immediately be given up; and we ſhould eſteem ourſelves moſt happy that a ſacrifice which ought to coſt ſo little, can be available towards a ſecurity ſo momentous, as that of everlaſting life.

Beſides this care with regard to our companions, we muſt carefully obſerve ſome hours to converſe with God alone, in ſolitude and prayer. Thoſe who are in great employments, have ſo many indiſpenſable duties to attend, that they have little time left for this holy intercourſe with God, unleſs they are very careful in the management of their hours: ſo little, that if they have any inclination for amuſement,

ment, they will, with difficulty, obſerve the appointed hours, for the ſervice of either God or their neighbour.

We muſt then ſteadily adhere to ſome rule: the ſeverity of obſerving it may appear exceſſive; but without this regularity all will fall into confuſion, we ſhall become diſſipated, relaxed, loſe our ſtrength, and become inſenſibly more and more alienated from God; nor ſhall we perceive this wandering of our hearts, until we have ſtrayed ſo far, that we have neither hope nor courage ſufficient to enable us to return.

Let us pray then, let us pray. Prayer is our only ſafety. *Bleſſed be God who hath not caſt out my prayer, nor turned his mercy from me.** To be faithful in prayer, we muſt be faithful in regulating all the occupations of the day with an inflexible reſolution.

Be content with your daily bread, and remember that in the wilderneſs the manna they gathered for more than one day, preſently corrupted; ſo true it is, that the children of God ſhould be wholly intent upon rightly employing their preſent graces, without deſiring to anticipate the deſigns of his Providence upon them.

In this way God will be your guide, and will himſelf travel with you, as he did heretofore with the Iſraelites, to lead them ſtep by

* Pſ. lxvi. 20.

ſtep

ſtep through the wilderneſs to the land of promiſe. Happy will you be, if you ſuffer God to take poſſeſſion of you, and to do in you what he pleaſes, not according to your inclinations, but his deſigns.

On Mortification.

GOD calls us to a daily and hourly exerciſe of mortification. And, perhaps, it is a very conſiderable one to avoid every thing that is prejudicial to our health. But God regulates all in the heart he once poſſeſſes: he accuſtoms it gently to the preſcribed rule, deprives the will of a certain inflexibility, and removes a dangerous confidence in our own judgment; he blunts the edge of the deſires, cools the paſſions, detaches the man not only from outward objects, but even from himſelf, and renders him gentle, amiable, ſimple, lowly in his own eyes, and ready to will or not will, according to his good pleaſure. Let this be our ſtate, as it is the will of God, and let us not reſiſt him.

That mortification, that comes from the hand of God, is more profitable for us than thoſe ſenſible fervours in prayer, which are according to our own taſte and inclination.

Very

Very frequently thoſe mortifications which conſiſt in a conſtant reſignation to the ſtrokes of Providence, are more advantageous to us, than the greateſt artificial auſterities which render us more ſingular, and tempt us to a vain complacency in ourſelves. He who conſtantly accepts every thing that happens in the order of Providence, and ſeeks nothing but what it gives, will find that every day will make him a partaker of the croſs of Chriſt. Theſe croſſes are as truly the effect of Providence, as any other thing the moſt eſſential to our life: they are our daily bread, which God never ſuffers us to want, and are frequently the pureſt mortifications zealous ſouls can ſuffer, as they prevent their mortifying themſelves according to their own choice, and call them to a perpetual ſtate of ſuch mortification as is ſuitable to the deſigns of God.

When we are not reſigned to the humiliations of Providence, there is great reaſon to fear that there is too much of illuſion in thoſe auſterities which our fervour inclines us to ſeek: this fervour is often deceitful, and I believe it is expedient to try our ſouls by their fidelity to daily and providential croſſes.

On Self-renunciation.

THE foundation of all our malady is a blind ſelf-love, which becomes a ſpecies of idolatry. All that we love outwardly, we love only for ourſelves. We muſt not be deceived by thoſe generous friendſhips in which we appear to forget ourſelves, and think only of the intereſts of thoſe to whom we are attached. When, in the commerce of friendſhip, we have no ſordid intereſts in view, we purſue others which are more latent, more delicate, and more laudable in the opinion of the world; but theſe are ſo much the more dangerous and capable of corrupting us, as they afford a finer nouriſhment to ſelf-love.

Let us conclude, that the love of God alone can detach us from ourſelves. If the powerful hand of God did not ſupport us, we ſhould not know where to ſet our foot to take one ſtep out of ourſelves.

Nothing it a more effectual bar to receiving this grace of ſelf-renunciation than a philoſophical pride, and ſelf-love, diſguiſed under the maſk of a worldly generoſity. The more we have by nature of candour, complacency in virtue, delicacy of ſentiment, a taſte for probity, and diſintereſted friendſhip, the more we ought to ſtrive to get looſe from ſelf, and fear the being delighted with thoſe natural gifts.

As it may be enquired what this ſelf-renunciation is, in ſome other reſpects, I will add, we are eaſily convinced that it is our duty to renounce all criminal pleaſures, unjuſt acquiſitions, and evident vanities: but it is not ſo eaſy to ſee the neceſſity of renouncing wealth which is lawfully acquired, the ſweets of an innocent and reputable life; and, finally, the honours which are the conſequence of a good reputation.

What makes it difficult for us to underſtand that we ſhould renounce theſe things is, that we ought not abſolutely to reject them, but ſhould uſe them ſoberly, ſuitable to that ſtate in which Providence has placed us.

The comforts of a calm and peaceful life, are neceſſary to ſupport us under the difficulties annexed to every ſtate: with regard to honours, we ſhould have reſpect to decency; and to ſupply our neceſſities, ſhould preſerve the wealth we poſſeſs. How then, it may be ſaid, do we renounce thoſe things, while we employ our care to preſerve them? The true way is, without anxiety to do all we can to preſerve them, that we may make a ſober uſe of them, without ſetting our affections on them.

Thus the way to renounce things in themſelves evil, is to reject them with horror; but the way to renounce good things, is to uſe them with moderation as occaſion requires, always ſtudying to retrench thoſe imaginary wants, with which our avaricious nature would pamper itſelf.

Obſerve,

Obſerve, that we muſt not only renounce evil, but good things; for Jeſus Chriſt has ſaid without reſtriction, *Whoſoever forſaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my diſciple.**

We muſt renounce thoſe that are moſt dear to us, and whom we are in duty bound to love; this renunciation conſiſts in loving them only for God, enjoying the conſolation of their friendſhip occaſionally, and with ſobriety, being ready to part with them when it is the will of God, and never ſeeking in them the true repoſe of the heart. This is the chaſtity of true Chriſtian friendſhip, which ſeeks the heavenly ſpouſe in a mortal and terreſtrial friend. In this manner we uſe the creatures and the world, *as if we uſed them not*, according to St. Paul's expreſſion: we deſire to uſe what God beſtows, and love them ſo far as it is his will we ſhould; reſtraining our hearts in the uſe of them, and reſerving our affections for a more proper object.

It is in this ſenſe that Jeſus Chriſt would have us renounce father, mother, brethren, ſiſters, and friends. If at the bottom of our heart we are attached to any creatures more than to God, our heart is no longer worthy of him.

After having renounced all outward things, then comes the laſt ſacrifice, which is that of all within us; and that is in reality renouncing ourſelves. We are as much captivated with our underſtanding, our wiſdom, and our virtue, as

* Luke xiv. 27.

a woman

a woman of this world is with her beauty; we regard them with the ſame complacency; we delight in being thought wiſe, temperate, and free from the intoxications that diſorder others; and by this means we become intoxicated with the vanity of not appearing to be ſo in proſperity, and of renouncing, by a courageous moderation, all that the world moſt prizes.

O how dangerous is this ſtate! How ſubtil is its poiſon! How certainly ſhall we offend God, if we reſign our hearts to this refined ſelf-love! We muſt then renounce all enjoyment of, and all natural complacency in our own wiſdom and virtue.

Remember, that the more excellent the gifts of God are, the more jealous he is of them. He deſires we ſhould be attached to him alone, and not to his gifts, be they ever ſo excellent, only ſo far as is according to his deſign, to unite us the more intimately to himſelf. Whoever regards with complacency, and as his own property the graces he has received from God, converts them into poiſon.

Let us beware then of appropriating to ourſelves, not only outward things, as our talents, and the favour we ſtand in with men, but alſo the internal gifts of God. The goodneſs of our will is not leſs the free gift of God, than our being and life which come from him. We muſt live then as debtors; all that is in us, and all that we are, is but a loan from God, to be uſed according to the intention of the lender; and

and never to be conſidered as at our own diſpoſal, and as a poſſeſſion that belongs to us.

It is this ſpirit which appropriates nothing to itſelf, and this ſimplicity with regard to ourſelves to follow the motions of God, in which conſiſts the ſolid renunciation of ourſelves. And when this deſire is in the bottom of the heart, God himſelf leads us as it were by the hand, and exerciſes this renunciation in the daily occurrences of life.

It is not by painful reflexions and continual contentions that we renounce ourſelves; but by abſtaining from all ſelf-ſeeking, and being willing to be as God pleaſes that we loſe ourſelves in him.

We ſee in ourſelves many real good intentions, but we ſhould be terrified did we perceive to how many things we are ſtill attached. It is not indeed wilfully and premeditately that we have theſe attachments; we ſay not in ourſelves, I have them, and I deſire to have them; but, notwithſtanding, we really have them, and are ſometimes afraid of digging too deep, leſt we ſhould diſcover them: we are ſenſible of our weakneſs, and dare not proceed.

Sometimes alſo we are willing to examine ourſelves to the bottom, that we may ſacrifice all to God; but this is only a fit of zeal, like that of Peter's, when he ſaid, *Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into priſon and to death.* And afterwards was terrified by the queſtion of a ſervant maid.

We

We ſeek to diſcover all our defects; and God directs us in this enquiry. He refuſes us a light too ſtrong for our ſtate of grace: he ſuffers us not to perceive in our heart, that which it is not yet the ſeaſon to deprive us of. It is a wonderful procedure of the Divine goodneſs, never to ſolicit us inwardly to forſake aught that we have hitherto loved and poſſeſſed, without ſuitably enlightening us; and that his light never directs us to make any ſacrifice which he does not give us ſtrength to perform.

We may reſt in peace, provided we are faithful to what we know. Whatever elſe is neceſſary for us, God will reveal in his own time. It is in mercy that God thus conceals from us ſuch things as we are not yet able to bear. We have a certain impatient zeal for our own perfection, which is deſirous for immediately ſeeing and ſacrificing all: but an humble confidence, while under the hand of God, is more uſeful towards accompliſhing the death of ſelf, than all our uneaſy efforts to advance our own perfection.

Let us then be content to follow the light of the preſent moment, without looking further. It is our daily bread, which God gives us only for one day; it is like the manna in the wilderneſs; and he that would gather a double portion, and make proviſion for the enſuing day, groſsly deceives himſelf. It will corrupt in his hands, and he will have no more of it to feed on, than he who gathers it for one day.

It

It is this child-like dependance on God, to which he would fain bend our ſpirits. He diſpenſes his internal light, as a prudent mother aſſigns to her daughter the taſk ſhe is to perform, and as ſoon as it is finiſhed, allots her another.

Virtue.

THE practice of virtue does not conſiſt in words; they can never ſuffice to attain the kingdom of God. It is to be attained only by a perpetual violence, which we muſt offer to ourſelves; a violence, when the torrent of the world is to be reſiſted, which prevents our doing good, after having ſo frequently been the occaſion of our doing evil; a violence, when we are in part to renounce what is neceſſary, that we may not be deceived, in too readily imagining that we have relinquiſhed what is ſuperfluous; a violence, when we are to mortify our ſpirits, not thinking we have done ſufficient when we have mortified our bodies; a violence, for being perfectly contented in whatever ſtate we are, without deſiring more conveniencies, more honour, more health, or any other company, not even that of good people. Laſtly, a violence, to arrive at that degree of indifference, which is neceſſary for a Chriſtian, who has no will but that of his Creator, to whom he leaves the

the ſucceſs of all his affairs, though he employs himſelf in them; who acts ſuitably to his condition, but does ſo without anxiety; who takes pleaſure in looking up to God, and does not fear the being retarded by him; who hopes that the eye of God will be upon him for the correction of his faults; and who peacefully relies on his mercy, with regard to the puniſhment of them.

Salvation.

SALVATION is not to be attained merely by ceaſing to do ill; we muſt alſo add to it the practice of that which is good. The kingdom of heaven is too great a treaſure to be beſtowed on the timorous ſlave, who only abſtains from evil becauſe he is afraid to commit it. God deſires to have children who ſhould love him for his goodneſs, and not ſlaves, that only ſerve him through the dread of his power. We muſt then love him, and conſequently do all that true love inſpires.

Many apparently well-meaning people deceive themſelves on this ſubject; they are jealous of their liberty, and afraid of loſing it by devoting themſelves too much to piety: but they ſhould conſider, *that they are not their own*,* but God's who has created them ſolely for himſelf, and ought to rule them as he pleaſes.

* 1 Cor. vi. 19.

Againſt

Againſt Temptations.

THERE are two things to be done with regard to temptations. The firſt is to be guided by our inward light, in retrenching, without delay, as far as we are at liberty, all that may nouriſh or awaken the temptation. I ſay, as far as we are at liberty; becauſe it does not always depend upon us to avoid what excites to evil. What is incident to the ſtate in which Providence has placed us, is not ſuppoſed to be in our own power.

The ſecond rule is, when tempted, always to turn to God, and not diſquiet ourſelves by conſidering whether we have not already in part conſented, ſo as to interrupt the immediate tendency of our heart to God. By examining too cloſely whether we have not been guilty of ſome infidelity, we are in danger of being again involved in the temptation. The ſhorteſt and ſureſt method is to act like a child at the breaſt, who, if it is ſhewn a frightful monſter, ſtarts back with horror, and ſinks into the boſom of its mother, that it may no longer perceive it.

The practice of the preſence of God, is of all others the moſt ſovereign remedy; it comforts, ſupports, and calms us; we muſt not be ſurprized even at the moſt ſhameful temptations. *My ſon*, ſays the ſon of Sirach, *if thou come to ſerve the Lord, prepare thy ſoul for temptation.**

* Eccles. xi. 1.

Every

Every thing in this world is temptation.—Croſſes tempt us, by irritating our pride, and proſperity by flattering it. Our whole life is a continual warfare, but a warfare in which Jeſus Chriſt fights for us.

We muſt march on, though temptations ſurrounds us; as a traveller, ſurprized by a ſtorm, wraps himſelf up in his cloak, and proceeds notwithſtanding the foulneſs of the weather.

With regard to what is paſt, when we have ſatisfied our conſcience by a ſincere repentance, evinced by the actual forſaking of our ſins, we have nothing to do but to caſt all our iniquities into the abyſs of mercy.

When an involuntary remembrance of paſt troubles occurs, we ſhould remain confounded, and as it were nothing in the preſence of God, peacefully bearing in his adorable ſight, all the ſhame and ignominy of our ſins, without ſeeking, cheriſhing, or recalling the too dangerous remembrance of them.

On Sorrow.

WITH regard to ſuch a kind of ſadneſs as depreſſes and contracts the heart, there are two rules, the obſervation of which ſeems to me of great importance. The firſt is, to remove this ſorrow

ſorrow by ſuch means as Providence has furniſhed us with: for example, not to burthen ourſelves with laborious buſineſs, ſo as to ſink under a load greater than we are able to bear; to ſpare not only the powers of the body, but likewiſe thoſe of the mind; to ſet apart hours for prayer, for reading, for enlivening our ſpirits by pious, nay even by cheerful converſation, ſo as at once to recreate both our bodies and minds, ſuitable to our neceſſity.

We ſhould alſo have ſome wiſe and diſcreet perſon, to whom we might unburden our hearts of every thing, except the ſecrets of another; for this is a comfort that peculiarly eaſes an heavy heart.

Troubles, too long retained in the heart, frequently burſt it; whereas, if we could vent them, we ſhould ſee they were not deſerving of all the bitterneſs they cauſed.

The ſecond rule is, peacefully to bear all involuntary emotions of ſorrow. Inward diſcouragements expedite our progreſs in the road of faith, provided they do not ſtop us, and that the ſlothfulneſs of the ſoul does not yield to this ſorrow, which if permitted, would conquer all its powers. A ſtep taken in this ſtate, is more valuable than a thouſand taken when the ſoul is in a more ſweet and comfortable diſpoſition.

This ſenſible courage, which renders every thing eaſy, which does and ſuffers all things, is often deceitful, as it nouriſhes ſelf-confidence,

and

and a certain elevation of heart. This courage, though ſometimes wonderfully edifying to the world, nouriſhes within us a ſecret ſatisfaction, and inward teſtimony, which is a ſubtle poiſon. We reliſh our own virtue, are delighted with it, we would poſſeſs it, and are pleaſed with its ſtrength.

A weak and humble ſoul, who finds no reſource in itſelf, who fears, is troubled, and ſorrowful; who cries out, like our Lord on the croſs, *My God, my God, why haſt thou forſaken me?* is much more purified, more dead to all the deſires of ſelf, than thoſe brave ſouls, who enjoy in peace the fruits of their virtue.—Happy ſoul that is thus bruiſed by God, and whom he deprives of all ſtrengh in itſelf, that it may be ſupported only by him; who is ſenſible of its own poverty, and is content; who bears, beſides outward croſſes, this great inward one of the deſpondency of the heart, without which all others avails but little.

On Dejection and Diſſipation.

THERE are two things which eſpecially diſquiet; the one is to avoid a certain diſſipation, the other to bear up againſt dejection and melancholy. As to diſſipation it will never be remedied

remedied by ſtrained reflections. Do not hope to do the work of grace by the ſprings and ingenuities of nature. Be content to give up thy will without reſerve to God, and never regard any ſtate as grievous, but accept it with reſignation to the Divine Providence.

Be not troubled that the ſenſible preſence of God is often withdrawn; content thyſelf in the courſe of the day, with a general view of God, ſo that if at any time thou art aſked, what is the diſpoſition of thy heart, it would be true to ſay, it aims at God, though ſome other objects might outwardly require its attention. With regard to the wanderings of thy imagination which are unavoidable, be not too much grieved at them. We often diſtract ourſelves by the fear of being diſtracted, and afterwards by the regret of having been ſo.

We ſhould ſay to a man, who ſpent his time in conſidering the falls he might poſſibly meet with inſtead of proceeding on his journey, Go on, go on: I ſay the ſame to thee; Go on, without ſtopping or looking behind. *Walk*, ſays the apoſtle to the Theſſalonians, *that ye may abound more and more.** The aboundings in the love of God will rectify miſtakes much more effectually, than thy diſquiet and uneaſy returns to ſelf.

* 1 Theſſ. iv. 1.

How we ought to watch over ourſelves.

WITH regard to watching over ourſelves, the following appears to me to be the beſt manner of practiſing this vigilance. The wiſe and diligent traveller always watches over his ſteps, and has his eyes upon that part of the road which is immediately before him: he is not inceſſantly turning back to count his ſteps, and examine the road he has paſſed; this would be loſing that time in which he ought to proceed on his journey.

A ſoul whom God really leads by the hand, ought indeed to watch over its way, but then it ſhould be with a ſimple and tranquil vigilance, confined to the preſent moment, and without any uneaſineſs proceeding from ſelf-love. This vigilance is a continual attention to the will of God to fulfil it every moment, and not a return to ourſelves that we may be aſſured of our ſtate, which God would have us ignorant of. Wherefore the Pſalmiſt ſays, *Mine eyes are ever looking unto the Lord, for he ſhall pluck my feet out of the net.**

Obſerve that to guide his feet aright, in the way where the net is laid, inſtead of caſting his eyes down to the ground to examine all his ſteps, he lifts them up unto the Lord. We can never watch better over ourſelves, than

* Pſalm xxv. 15.

when we walk with God always present before our eyes, as he directed Abraham to do. And in effect, to what should all our watchfulness tend but to follow step by step the will of God? He who conforms himself to it in all things, truly watches over himself, and every thing is sanctified to him.

On the inward teaching of God's Holy Spirit.

IT is certain from Scripture,* that the spirit of God dwelleth in us, that it acts there, that it there prays without ceasing, that it there asks for us, what we ourselves know not how to ask for, that it animates us, speaks to us in silence, suggests all truth to us, and unites us so to itself, that we become† one spirit with God. This is what the teachers who are furthest removed from the inward life, cannot avoid acknowledging. Yet notwithstanding these principles, in their practice, they aim at supposing, that the outward written law, or at most a certain light, derived from Scripture and reasoning, is what inwardly enlightens us, and that afterwards our reason acts of itself from that instruction. They esteem not enough that in-

* Rom. viii. John xiv.

† 1 Cor. vi. 17. *He that is joined to the Lord, is one Spirit.*

ward

ward teacher, which is the Holy Spirit, and which effects all in us. He is the ſoul of our ſoul: we could not form a thought or deſire but through him. Alas, how great then is our blindneſs! we eſteem ourſelves as if alone in this inward ſanctuary; and, quite the contrary, God is more intimately there than we ourſelves.

Perhaps it will be ſaid, What then are we inſpired? Yes, without doubt. Without the actual inſpiration of the ſpirit of grace, we could neither do, will, or believe any good. We are then always inſpired, but we inceſſantly ſtifle this inſpiration. God ceaſes not to ſpeak, but the noiſe and hurry of things without, and our paſſions within, deafen, and hinder us from attending to him. We muſt ſilence every creature, we muſt ſilence ourſelves alſo, to hear, in a profound ſtillneſs of the ſoul, this inexpreſſible voice of Chriſt, the bridegroom of our ſouls. We muſt be very attentive, for it is a ſoft and ſtill voice, which is not to be heard but by thoſe who liſten to it alone. O how ſeldom does the ſoul keep ſilence enough to let God ſpeak! The loweſt whiſper of our vain deſires, or ſelf-love attentive to itſelf, diſturbs all the words of the Spirit of God. We hear plain enough that he aſks for ſomething; but we know not what he ſays, and are often glad not to underſtand it. The ſmalleſt reſerve, the leaſt regard for ſelf, the leaſt fear of underſtanding too plainly, that God aſks more than

we are willing to give him, disturbs this inward voice. Shall we be surprized then, if so many, even pious persons, but still full of amusements, vain desires, false wisdom and confidence in their own virtues, cannot hear it, and regard this inward voice as a fanatical chimera. Alas, what would they be at by their disdainful reasoning? To what purpose would the outward word of teachers be, and even of the Scriptures, if it were not for the inward voice of the holy Spirit, which gives them all their efficacy? The outward word of the gospel itself, without this living efficacious word within, would be but an empty sound. It is the letter *that alone* killeth, and the spirit *that alone* giveth life. O word, O eternal and all powerful word of the Father, it is thou that speakest in the bottom of our souls! That word which proceeded out of the mouth of our Saviour during the days of his mortal life, would not have had so much virtue, nor been productive of such fruits on earth, but because it was animated by this word of life, which is the word itself. This made Peter say, *Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life.**

It is not then only the outward law of the gospel, which God shews us inwardly by the light of reason and faith; it is his spirit that speaks, that moves us, that operates in us, and animates us: so that it is this spirit, which does

* John vi. 68.

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in us all the good we do, as it is our ſoul that animates our body, and regulates all its motions. It is then true that we are continually inſpired, and that we do not live the life of grace, but ſo far as we partake of this inward inſpiration. But, O my God, few Chriſtians are ſenſible of this; for there are very few, who by their voluntary diſſipation, or their reſiſtance, do not deſtroy it. This inſpiration inſtils into us obedience, patience, ſweetneſs, humility, and all the other virtues neceſſary to every Chriſtian. It is an invitation in the bottom of the ſoul to obedience and reſignation ſuitable to the deſigns of the love of God: it contains not in itſelf any preſumptive or illuſive ſnare: on the contrary, it preſerves us in the hands of God, attributing every thing to grace, without deſtroying our liberty; and leaving nothing to pride or imagination.

Theſe principles being laid down, it muſt be acknowledged that God *ſpeaks inceſſantly in us.** He ſpeaks in impenitent ſinners; but they being deafened by the noiſe of the world, and their paſſions, cannot hear him: his word is to them as a tale. He ſpeaks alſo in penitent ſinners; theſe feel a remorſe of conſcience, and that remorſe is the voice of God, which reproaches them inwardly for their ſins. When theſe ſinners are effectually touched, they find no difficulty in underſtanding this ſecret voice; for it is that which ſmites them ſo ſharply. It is

* Thomas à Kempis, Lib. 3. C. iii. Sect. 3.

in them the two-edged ſword St. Paul ſpeaks of; it goes to *the dividing aſunder of the ſoul and ſpirit.** God cauſes himſelf to be felt, taſted, and obeyed; they hear this ſoft voice, which conveys into the bottom of their heart a tender reproach, and by this the heart is broken. This is true and pure contrition.

God ſpeaks likewiſe in enlightened and learned perſons, whoſe outward lives are regular in all things, and who are apparently adorned with many virtues: but very frequently theſe perſons, being full of themſelves and their own knowledge, hearken too much to themſelves to hear God. They reaſon upon every thing; they do every thing upon principles of human wiſdom and prudential rules, which would be better done through the channel of ſimplicity, and docility to the Spirit of God. Theſe perſons ſometimes ſeem to have more goodneſs than others; and they have it in a certain degree; but it is an adulterated goodneſs. They are maſters of themſelves, and would always be ſo, according to the capacity of their reaſon; they would be always in the hand of their own council: they are ſtrong and great in their own eyes. O my God, *I "thank thee*, with Jeſus Chriſt, that thou haſt "hid thy ſecrets from the wiſe and prudent, "and haſt revealed them unto babes." It is only children thou art familiar with. Thou

* Heb. iv. 12.

treateſt

treateſt others after their own way. They deſire knowledge and ſplendid virtues; thou giveſt them ſhining parts, and makeſt them great. But this is not the beſt portion. There is ſomething more reſerved for thy dear children. They repoſe themſelves with John, on thy boſom. As for thy great ones who always dread ſtooping and becoming little, thou letteſt them remain in their greatneſs: they ſhall never taſte thy careſſes and familiar intercourſe.

I have often remarked, that a ſinner of ſmall natural underſtanding, when he becomes ſenſibly affected with the love of God, and a ſenſe of his errors, is more diſpoſed to hear this inward language of the ſpirit of grace, than ſome enlightened and learned perſons, who are grown old in their own wiſdom. God, who ſeeks only to communicate himſelf, finds not room in thoſe ſouls, full of themſelves, and ſo long nouriſhed by their own wiſdom and virtues: but he converſes freely with the ſimple, and as the Scriptures ſay, *His ſecret is with the righteous.**

It is very uncommon for ſuch as are entirely devoted to God to fall into deliberate ſins. Small faults appear great in our eyes, in proportion as the pure light of God increaſes in our ſouls; as the riſing ſun diſcovers to us with more exactneſs and clearneſs thoſe objects

* Prov. iii. 32.

which,

which, during the night, we could only ſee confuſedly. The increaſe of inward light will diſcover many imperfections, in a far worſe light than they have hitherto appeared. Many miſeries will be ſeen to flow out of the heart, which were little ſuſpected to be found there.

A ſoul that depends on God alone, is not ſurpriſed at the ſight of his own wretchedneſs; it is contented to ſee that it can do nothing, and that God alone can do all.

One important rule is to abſtain from ſin: let us beware of reſiſting or extinguiſhing the Spirit of God, who inwardly warns us of it. Faults, committed through precipitation or weakneſs, are trifles, in compariſon of thoſe where we are deaf to the ſecret voice of the bleſſed Spirit, which ſpeaks in the bottom of our hearts.

When any thing is required from thee that ſeems impoſſible to nature, ſay to thyſelf, Nothing is impoſſible to God.

We muſt not be diſcouraged either by the experience of our weakneſs, or the diſlike of a buſy life, if we are engaged in it; it is a mercy from God that we bewail this perturbation; and the bewailing it is an antidote which prevents its corrupting our hearts.

When we ſtumble, or even fall, let us think of nothing but riſing again, and renewing our courſe.

Be diſcouraged at nothing, but ſupport thyſelf with humility in inequalities, weakneſſes, and

and troubles: bleſs God for the progreſs others make in virtue, as ſincerely as if thou hadſt made it thyſelf.

On Fidelity in ſmall Matters.

IT is in piety, as in the economy of temporal goods: we ſhall be ſooner ruined by the neglect of trifles than by great expenſes. Whoever knows how to make ſmall matters turn to the beſt account, will, in ſpiritual as well as temporal affairs, amaſs great riches. The greateſt ſums are only ſmall ones accumulated and carefully collected. He who lets nothing be loſt will ſoon grow rich.

Beſides, we ſhould conſider that God does not ſo much regard our actions, as the motive of love which incites us to perform them, and the compliance he requires of our will. Men judge of our actions only by what appears outwardly, God accounts as nothing, all that is in them moſt glaring in the eyes of men.

What he would have, is a pure intention, a will ready for all things, and pliant in his hands, with a ſincere detachment from ourſelves. All this is often exerciſed with leſs danger to our pride, and in a way that tries us more ſeverely on common occaſions, than on the moſt extra-

ordinary.

ordinary. Nay, we often value a trifle more than a matter ſeemingly of great importance; we ſhould, perhaps, find more difficulty to renounce a favourite amuſement, than to beſtow a large ſum in alms.

We the more eaſily deceive ourſelves in ſmall things, as we believe them innocent, and imagine ourſelves leſs attached to them. Nevertheleſs, we may eaſily perceive by our concern when it pleaſes God to deprive us of them, how exceſſive and inexcuſable our enjoyment of, and attachment to them was. Beſides, if we are negligent on ſmall occaſions, we ſhall often give offence to our family, our domeſticks, and the world. They cannot imagine that we are ſincerely pious, when in particular inſtances they perceive us remiſs and irregular. What reaſon have they to believe, that we ſhould, without heſitation, make the greateſt ſacrifices, when they ſee that we decline the ſmalleſt?

But what is of all other things the moſt dangerous is, that this neglect of trivial matters accuſtoms the ſoul to infidelity. It grieves the holy Spirit, we become abandoned to our own will, and regard as nothing an offence againſt God. On the contrary, perfect love eſteems nothing little, every thing that can either pleaſe or diſpleaſe God ſeems important to it. Not that perfect love fills the ſoul with uneaſineſs and ſcruples, but it ſets no bounds to its fidelity, it works ſimply with God; and as it does not embarraſs itſelf with things that God requires

quires not of it, so it never hesitates upon what he does require, whether it be great or whether it be small. It is not then by uneasiness that we become faithful, but by a sentiment of love, which is free from the fears and disquiets of a scrupulous soul. We are, as it were, drawn on by the love of God, nor do we wish to act otherwise than we do. Whilst God urges the soul, with regard to the smallest particulars, and seems to deprive it of all liberty, it finds itself enlarged, and enjoys a profound peace in him. O how happy is the soul in this state! As for those who have naturally less exactness, they ought to observe a more inviolable law with regard to small matters. They are tempted to despise them; to count them as nothing; they do not enough consider the consequence of them; they do not represent to themselves the insensible progress of the passions; they even forget their own fatal experiences. They choose rather to promise themselves an imaginary steadiness, and to confide in their own courage, which has so often deceived them, than to be subject to a continual fidelity. It is a trifle, they say. Yes, it is a trifle, but such a trifle as is every thing to you, a trifle to which you are so attached as to refuse to part with it to God; a trifle, which in order to excuse the refusal of, you despise in words, but in reality such a trifle as you keep back from God, and as will prove your destruction. It is not a greatness of soul which induces us to despise

small.

ſmall things: on the contrary, it is by having too limited views, that we regard any thing as ſmall, which is attended with ſuch important conſequences. The more difficulty we find in attending to ſmall things, the more we ought to fear our negligence, and miſtruſt ourſelves. He that contemneth ſmall things ſhall fall by little and little.

Fear not this continual attention to ſmall things. At firſt ſome ſteadineſs and courage will be neceſſary; but it is a ſelf-denial you have occaſion for, that will conſtitute your peace and ſecurity; without it you cannot have either. God will by degrees render this ſtate ſweet and eaſy. True love is attentive without pain or contention.

On Tranſitory Motions, on Fidelity, and Simplicity.

WHENEVER a motion of vain complacency, ſelf-confidence, haughtineſs, and impatience at the weakneſs of others, or at the troubles of our own ſtate, is perceived, we ſhould let all theſe things fall as a ſtone to the bottom of the ſea, and muſt defer acting till we

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are in such a disposition as recollection ought to put us in.

If, through the surprise of passion, any malignant emotion of nature should escape us, we must not be discouraged; but still pursuing our course, bear in peace before God the humiliation of our fault: by the inward confusion it occasions, it will serve to promote the death of self, to prevent the appropriation of the gifts of God, and to cause us to consider ourselves as nothing before him.

The principal thing is to renounce our own wisdom by a simple conduct, and to be ready to sacrifice the favour, esteem, and approbation of the world whenever God so conducts as to render it expedient. We are not to meddle with such things as God requires not of us, nor needlessly expose ourselves, by asserting truths which well meaning people are not yet able to bear.

When God gives the signal, we must part with and hazard all to follow him. To hesitate, to stop, to faint at what he would have us do, to dread the exposing ourselves too much, to be willing to shelter ourselves from all disgusts and contradictions, to seek plausible excuses to dispense with our performing certain good actions, attended with difficulty and trouble, when we are convinced in our conscience that God expects them from us, and that he has placed us in a state to accomplish them; this

this would be to retake ourſelves, after having devoted ourſelves to God.

Beware of this infidelity. Nothing is ſo terrible as inwardly to reſiſt God; it is the ſin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, which Jeſus Chriſt aſſures us, *ſhall not be forgiven, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.** This reſiſtance inſenſibly extinguiſhes the ſpirit of grace in the heart.

We are not to judge of the Virtues, which outwardly appear in ourſelves or others, according to Human Ideas.

IF we are ſurpriſed at the weakneſs and corruption of men, it is a ſign we have not dived deep enough into the miſeries of human nature in general, and of our own in particular. If we expected nothing good from men, nothing that is evil in them would aſtoniſh us. Our aſtoniſhment proceeds then from our regarding humanity as ſomething, whereas it is nothing, and worſe than nothing. The tree ought not to ſurpriſe us, when it bears its natural fruits. But all our admiration is due to Jeſus Chriſt,

* Matt. xii. 32.

into

into whom we were grafted, as St. Paul says, when we were wild grapes, and instead of our former bitter fruits, produce the delicious fruits of virtue. Be not deceived by the most specious appearances of human virtue, which is poisoned by vain complacency and self-confidence. *That which is highly esteemed amongst men, is abomination in the sight of God.**

Let us cease to judge of virtues and vices, according to our own opinion which self-love has depraved, and according to our false idea of greatness. There is nothing great, but that which abates itself before the sole and sovereign greatness. The bias of our heart makes us endeavour to be great; but God would humble and lessen us in his hands. Let us suffer him to do so.

Many people, who seek God, are often full of troubles; not that God authorises their imperfections; but because their imperfections retard them, and prevent their advancing to him in the shortest way. They cannot advance quickly, for they are burthened with themselves, and a long train of superfluities. Some are ignorant of their own hearts, and imagine themselves attached to nothing, though they are attached to every thing. They are flattered by their own reasons, while they weigh those of others by the weights of the sanctuary; and by this means, while they talk of

* Luke xvi. 15.

nothing

nothing but righteouſneſs and fidelity, they become really unjuſt.

They are prejudiced againſt ſuch as they are jealous of: this jealouſy, which conceals itſelf in the moſt inward receſſes of the heart, exaggerates the ſmalleſt defects; they are full of their neighbours failings, and cannot be ſilent with regard to them. Hence proceed artful criticiſms and ill offices, which they are guilty of, without being intentionally ſo.

There are faults committed through paſſion and frailty, that we eaſily comprehend are not incompatible with ſincere piety; but we do not as clearly underſtand, that other faults, which are the conſequence of illuſion, ſelf-love, and cuſtom, are compatible with a ſincere intention to pleaſe God. It is true this intention is neither pure nor ſtrong enough; however, though weak and imperfect, it is ſincere within its own limits. A perſon is covetous, but he perceives it not; it is hid under ſpecious pretences; he calls it economy, a care to avoid waſte, a prudential foreſight. Another is envious, but perceives not this malignant paſſion which conceals itſelf; it dare not appear, the ſight of it would be productive of too much confuſion; it therefore diſguiſes itſelf, and ſometimes deceives the perſon that is troubled with it, more effectually than thoſe who examine it with critical eyes. A third is full of aſperity, difficult to be pleaſed, and apt to take offence on all occaſions: all this is the

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effect of self-interestedness; but this interestedness adorns itself with many specious reasonings. I conclude, therefore, that some good people have imperfections mixed with their good will; because their will, although good, is still weak, divided, and retarded, by the secret springs of self-love.

Our very ardour against the defects of others, is in itself a great defect. That disdain at the misery of others, is a misery that does not sufficiently know itself. When shall we regard as nothing all that is in ourselves or others? God is all good, the creature all evil.

The light of God alone can, by its increasing in us, enable us to penetrate the abyss of evil, which is in the heart of every man. But while it shows the depth of this evil, it shows also the good that God blends with it. It is a mixture of good and evil that we can scarce persuade ourselves of. The servants would separate them, but the master of the family says, *Let both grow together till the time of harvest.**

The chief thing is, not to be discouraged at so sad a spectacle, nor to carry our distrust too far. People, who are naturally open and confident, are more dejected and distrustful than others, when they are by experience discouraged from being so. There is much to guard against from this quarter, especially when our situation exposes to our view the miseries of the

* Matt xiii. 30.

the human race, *envy*, *jealousy*, *rash judgments*, &c. represent numberless innocent things as evil, and exaggerate many slight imperfections. These things unite to attack and weary our patience, our confidence, and charity; but let us not be moved, God reserves to himself faithful servants, who, if they do not all, do a great deal in comparison of the rest of the corrupted world, and considering their fallen nature.

They see their imperfections, and are humbled at them; they fight against them; they correct them, it is true, but slowly; but in the end they do correct them; they praise God for what they have done, and condemn themselves for what they have left undone.

If we are convinced that God ought to be served in a better manner, then, without hesitation, or setting any bounds to our desires, let us aspire after this true worship, where the creature has nothing left for it. O that this blessed state was ours! Far from impatiently bearing with those who are not in it, the vast extent of our hearts would render us indulgent and compassionate to all the weaknesses of their contracted hearts. The more perfect we are ourselves, the more apt we are to make allowances for the imperfections of others. The Pharisees could not endure the publicans and harlots, with whom Jesus Christ conversed with so much mildness and lenity. When we are no longer attached to self, we enter into that greatness of God which nothing wearies or discourages.

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When ſhall we attain this liberty and enlargement of heart! He who no longer lives to himſelf, is, through God, every thing to his neighbour: he who is ſtill in himſelf, lives neither to God or his neighbour, but in a ſmall degree.

May peace, truth, ſimplicity, liberty, pure faith, and a diſintereſted love, make us a perfect burnt-offering.

On the Advantages of Silence and Recollection.

WE ſhould endeavour to be as ſilent as the decency of human intercourſe will permit.—Silence produces the preſence of God, prevents many offenſive words, and ſuppreſſes much railery, and the paſſing many dangerous judgments on our neighbour.

Silence humbles the ſpirit, and by degrees detaches it from the world: it will ſupply our wants in the perplexities we experience. Provided we never ſpeak unprofitably, there will be many vacant moments, even in the midſt of company, in which we are detained againſt our will.

We wiſh for liberty to pray to God, and God who knows beſt what is needful for us, mortifies

mortifies us by placing us in a ſtate of perplexity and ſubjection.

The mortification that comes by the direction of God, will be more beneficial than the delights of prayer, made according to our own choice and fancy. So much retirement is not neceſſary in order to love God: when he affords us leiſure, we muſt take it, and profit by it: till then, let us exerciſe our faith, by firmly believing that whatever he gives is beſt for us.

Let us ſuffer patiently whatever comes acroſs. God deals with us according to our wants; and as we are ſenſible of the truths of religion, it is more requiſite to be mortified than to receive new lights.

A ſtate of diſſipation is to be feared, but this may be avoided by ſilence. If we are faithful to remain ſilent when it is not neceſſary for us to ſpeak, God will not ſuffer us to be diſſipated by uſeful converſation.

Theſe mortifications, which we chooſe ourſelves, do not deſtroy ſelf-love ſo effectually as thoſe which God daily diſtributes to us. Thoſe have nothing in them which can ſupport our ſelf-will: and as they come immediately from a merciful Providence, they bring with them a grace proportioned to all our neceſſities. We have, therefore, nothing to do, but daily to reſign ourſelves to God, who carries us in his arms, as a tender mother does her child: let us believe, hope, and love, with all the ſimplicity of children: in all our neceſſities, let us turn

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our eyes towards our heavenly Father: behold what he says in the Scriptures, *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.**

On the Advantages of the Cross.

WE find it difficult to be convinced of the mercy of God in loading those he loves with crosses. Why, say they, should he delight in our sufferings? Cannot he make us good without making us miserable? Yes, without doubt, God could do so; for nothing is impossible to him. He holds in his Almighty hands the hearts of the children of men, and turneth them as he pleaseth. But God, who has power to save us without the cross, has not willed it so: in like manner as he has willed that men should arrive at maturity by degrees, and first pass through all the distresses and weaknesses of childhood, rather than be born in the full strength of riper years. In this he is the Master; our part is to be silent, and adore his profound wisdom, although we do not comprehend it.—Thus much we clearly see, that we cannot

* Isaiah xlix. 15.

become

become truly good, but in proportion as we become humble, and detached from ſelf, ſo as to render all to God.

The operation of grace which detaches us from ourſelves, and takes away ſelf-love, muſt, without a miracle of grace, be painful. God does not in the operations of grace, any more than in thoſe of nature, daily work miracles.

It would be as great a miracle in grace to ſee a perſon full of himſelf, become in a moment dead to all ſelf-intereſt and ſenſibility, as to ſee the child that went to bed laſt night, riſe this morning as tall and ſtrong as a man of thirty. God conceals his operations in the courſe of grace, as well as nature, under an inſenſible ſucceſſion of events, and by this means keeps us in the obſcurity of faith. He not only accompliſhes his work by degrees, but by means the moſt ſimple and ſuitable for its ſucceſs; that the means appearing ſuitable to the end, human wiſdom may attribute the ſucceſs to ſecond cauſes, and ſo the finger of God be leſs obſerved; otherwiſe all that God effects would be evidently a perpetual miracle, which would deſtroy that faith in which he would have us live.

It is to preſerve us in this obſcurity of faith, with regard to the operation of grace, that God renders it tedious and painful. He makes uſe of the inconſtancy and ingratitude of the creatures, and the diſguſts and diſappointments we experience in proſperity, to detach us from ourſelves,

ourſelves, and that deceitful proſperity. He prevents our being proud of ourſelves by the experience of our weakneſs and corruption, which is manifeſt by our numberleſs relapſes.

We deſire to be ſuddenly conſumed by the flames of pure love; but this would coſt us ſcarcely any thing: it is the exceſs of our ſelf-love that makes us deſirous to become thus perfect in a moment, and at ſo cheap a rate.

Of what then can we complain? Our evil is that we are all attached to the creatures, and ſtill more to ourſelves. God prepares a ſucceſſion of events, which by degrees draw us from the creatures, and in the end from ourſelves. This operation is painful; but it is our corruption which renders it neceſſary, and occaſions all the pain that we ſuffer. If our fleſh was ſound, the ſurgeon would make no inciſion in it: he only cuts in proportion to the depth of the wound, and ſo far as the fleſh is corrupted: if the operation is painful to us, it is becauſe of the extremity of our diſorder. Is it cruelty in the ſurgeon to cut to the quick? No, quite the reverſe; it is affection, it is judgment; he would thus treat his only ſon. God deals with us after the ſame manner. His fatherly heart does not ſeek to vex us: but he cuts us to the quick, in order to heal the ulcer in our hearts. He muſt take from us what we love too much; what we love with an irregular and faulty love; what we ſo love as to be prejudicial to the love of him. And what is the

conſequence

conſequence of this treatment? He makes us cry, like children, when a knife is taken from them, with which they were playing, and might have hurt themſelves. We weep and diſcourage ourſelves; we are ready to murmer againſt God, as children that are vexed with their mothers. But God ſuffers us to cry, and ſaves us. Even when he appears to overwhelm us, it is for our advantage, and to prevent the injury we would do to ourſelves. What we lament the loſs of here, would have made us lament eternally. What we eſteemed loſt, was really loſt when we imagined we poſſeſſed it. God has ſecured it, that he may ſpeedily reſtore it to us in an approaching eternity.

He deprives us of things we love, that we may love them with a pure, ſolid, and temperate love; and that he may ſecure to us the everlaſting enjoyment of them in his boſom, ſo as to do us an hundred fold more good, than we ourſelves know how to deſire in them.

In the creation of the univerſe, his wiſdom meaſured and weighed the ſmalleſt atom. It is he that each moment produces and renews the breath of life which animates us; it is he who numbers our days, and holds in his Omnipotent hands the keys of the grave, to open or to ſhut it.

What ſtrikes us moſt, is as nothing in the ſight of God; a little more, or a little leſs of life, is a difference which diſappears in the preſence of his eternity. Of what importance

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is it whether this weak veſſel, this body of clay, ſhould be reduced to aſhes a little ſooner, or a little later?

O how contracted are our views of things! We are alarmed to ſee a perſon die in the flower of his youth. We cry out, What a loſs is this! But to whom is the loſs? What does he loſe that dies? A few years of vanity and illuſion, to be ſpent in danger of eternal death. God takes him away from the midſt of his iniquities, and haſtens to ſnatch him from this corrupted world, and his own weakneſs. What do they loſe who moſt loved him? They loſe the poiſon of a worldly felicity; they loſe the forgetfulneſs of God and themſelves into which they were plunged; or rather, they gain by the efficacy of the croſs, the bleſſedneſs which comes from detachment. The ſame ſtroke that ſaves him who dies, prepares others (whom their ſorrows detach from themſelves) courageouſly to work out their ſalvation.

What difference is there now between two perſons who lived an hundred years ago? One of them ſurvived the other twenty years; but now they are both dead. Their ſeparation, which at that time appeared ſo long, does not appear ſo to us, and was in truth but a ſhort ſeparation. Some regard themſelves as if they were immortal, or at leaſt as if they had many years before them. O the folly of human wiſdom! Thoſe we ſee dying every day, follow cloſe upon thoſe who are already dead. The

man who this day ſets out on a journey, would not think himſelf at a great diſtance from him who ſet off but two days before him. Life glides away like a torrent. The paſt is but as a dream; the preſent, when we think we enjoy it, flies from us, and ſinks into the abyſs of the paſt; the future will be of the ſame nature, and will as rapidly paſs by us. The days, the months, the years, like the waves of the ſea, flow one after another: in a few moments, in a very few I ſay, and all ſhall be ended.

It is true we ſuffer, but then it is by the will of God, in order to purify us, and render us worthy of him. The world ſmiled upon us, and this proſperity poiſoned our hearts. Would we ſpend all our days, even to the moment of our death, in that ſoftneſs, that delicacy, that vain joy, that ſplendor, that triumph of pride, that reliſh for the world which is at enmity with Jeſus Chriſt, and that diſtance from the croſs, which alone ought to ſanctify us?

The world will frown upon us; it will ungratefully forget us, and ceaſe to acknowledge us; it will conſider us as in the claſs of thoſe things which no longer exiſt. Well, and are we to be ſurprized that the world continues to be like itſelf, unjuſt, deceitful, and perfidious? Yet it is this world we are not aſhamed to love. It is from this world that God would draw us, to deliver us from its curſed ſlavery, that we may enter into the liberty of detached ſouls.

O my

O my God, thou who feeſt the foundation of our miſery, it is thou alone that canſt heal it. Haſte then to beſtow on us faith, hope, love, and that Chriſtian fortitude which we want. Grant that we may inceſſantly look up to thee, O Father Almighty, who giveſt nothing to thy children but what is conductive to their ſalvation.

Lift up my heart, O my God; Give me one that will fear only to diſpleaſe thee. Lord, thou feeſt the weakneſs of thy creature, who has no reſource in himſelf, every thing fails him; and ſo much the better, provided thou doſt not fail him, and that he ſeeks in thee all that he deſpairs to find in his own heart.

On Croſſes.

ALL that is painful in our way to God, are croſſes, which we muſt patiently bear, and they will be a means of uniting us to him, if we endure them humbly. The things that confound and overwhelm our pride, will do us ſtill more good, than ſuch as animate our virtue. We have need to be caſt down, like Paul at the gates of Damaſcus, and to be deprived of all reſource but in God alone.

Nature only inſpires an haughty and diſdainful courage, and is provoked at thoſe perſons

that God makes uſe of, in order to humble us. We muſt bear his croſſes in ſilence, with an humble peaceful courage; being ſtrong in God, but not in ourſelves; great through the ſweetneſs of patience, and little through humility.

When God, in the humiliations he ſends us, wounds us even to the quick, ſo much the better: it is the merciful Phyſician that applies a remedy to thoſe diſorders he has a mind to heal: let us be ſilent, and adore the hand that ſtrikes us: let us not open our mouths but to ſay, "I have well deſerved it." Be the cup ever ſo bitter, we muſt drink it even to the dregs, as did Jeſus Chriſt. He died even for his murderers, and has taught us to love, bleſs, and pray for thoſe who are the cauſe of our ſufferings.

In the ſeaſons of adverſity and temptation we ought to be doubly earneſt in our prayers. We ſhall find in the heart of Jeſus dying on the croſs, all that we want in our own hearts, to engage us to love thoſe whom our pride prompts us to hate.

When we love the croſs, it is but half a croſs, becauſe love ſoftens every thing; and we ſuffer much becauſe we love little. Happy is he who ſuffers much, and wretched is he who ſuffers not with Jeſus Chriſt; for we are come into this world only to be made perfect through ſufferings.

God tries us by ſickneſs, and by outward ſubjections, all which we muſt turn to our advantage.

advantage. All our croſſes are neceſſary for us. When we ſuffer much, it is becauſe we have many attachments that ſhould be cut off.

Croſſes are our daily bread: our ſoul has occaſion for a certain portion every day, in order to detach it from itſelf, as the body ſtands in need of a certain quantity of food to nouriſh it. We ſtand in need of croſſes, and ſhould be deſtitute of all good, was not God careful to turn the life of this world into bitterneſs, in order to detach us from it.

The croſs is never without its fruit, when we receive it in the ſpirit of ſacrifice. We muſt accept it, adoring the hand of God, who lays it on us only for our ſanctification. Bleſſed is he who is always ready, and never ſays, it is too much; who depends not on himſelf, but on the Almighty; who deſires no more conſolation than God is willing to give him; and whoſe nouriſhment is the pure will of God.

There are in croſſes ſo many marks of mercy, that if nature is afflicted, faith ought to rejoice. It is in the croſs we find peace, by ſubmiſſion and the ſacrifice of our pleaſures. Thus far does God urge the ſoul to bring it from all that is not himſelf. What then is to be done, but to embrace the preſent croſs, and ſuffer ourſelves to be crucified? When he has thoroughly crucified, he comforts us; but does not as the creatures do, give us poiſonous comforts to nouriſh the venom of ſelf-love. His comforts are pure and ſolid.

The peace that is experienced in ſubmiſſion, without any outward alleviation, is a great gift: by this God accuſtoms us to be exerciſed without being dejected. Though our too ſlothful nature ſhould be caſt down, our heart remains firm; it is a peace ſo much the purer, as it is barren.

The conſideration of the right of God over us his creatures, and that of our own wretchedneſs, which deſerves nothing but humiliations and croſſes, is the bread that ought to nouriſh us in all trials. Let us ſuffer God to act; men can avail nothing: ſometimes, when all ſeems to be loſt, all is in reality ſaved. God is pleaſed to caſt us down, and raiſe us up again by his hand alone.

The croſſes, which we chooſe for ourſelves, are ſcarcely any thing: it is God alone who knows how to crucify us.

The croſſes which are ſent by God, and under which he would have us bend, will not in themſelves ſuppreſs our pride: it is only by a renunciation of our ſpirit in ſilence before God, that we ſhall become humble and ſoftened through his grace.

The croſſes of an anxious ſolicitude, with regard to futurity, are not according to the will of God: we have no unction to ſupport us in them: nor ſhall we ſuffer them but through an infidelity which alienates us from grace; ſo that they are always bitter, all is darkneſs, nor is there any reſource; and the ſoul that would, through

through curiosity, taste this forbidden fruit, finds in it nothing but death and rebellion without consolation. This is the effect of not trusting God, and daring to penetrate into those secrets of which he is jealous.

Let us then shut our eyes with regard to all that God conceals from us, and that he keeps in store in the treasures of his wisdom: let us adore without seeing; let us be silent: let us continue in peace. The crosses of the present moment always bring with them proportionable grace, and consequently their mitigation: we then see the hand of God which manifests itself in them.

Jesus Christ says, *Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.** The evil of each day is converted into good, when we suffer God to act. What are we that we should say to him, 'For what 'reason dost thou do this?' He is the Lord, and that is sufficient. *It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good.*† Whether he raises us up, or casts us down; whether he strikes or comforts us; whether he bruises us, or heals our wounds; whether he gives life or death, he is always the Lord; we are but his workmanship. What does it signify, so he is glorified, and his will accomplished in us? Our comfort ought to be the certainty that he wills our salvation.

Let us come out of ourselves; let us no longer love ourselves with a disorderly love,

* Matt. vi. 34. † 1 Sam. iii. 18.

and the will of God, which will in all things unfold itſelf, will alſo comfort us in whatever he brings to paſs around us, or in us.

When our heavenly Father tries us here below, with a variety of temptations both inward and outward, let us rejoice; for it is by ſuch afflictions, that our faith more precious than gold is purified. Let us rejoice, that we thus prove the deluſion and emptineſs of all that is not God; for it is by this experience that we are drawn from ourſelves and the deſires of the world. What, ſhall we be diſcouraged when it is the hand of God that haſtens to perform his work? This we every day wiſh that he may do, and yet when he begins to do it, we are troubled; our ſloth and impurities reſiſt the hand of God. A piety without croſſes is merely ideal.

Whilſt we remain ſhut up in ourſelves, we are expoſed to the contradictions of men; our paſſions claſh with thoſe of our neighbours; the ſenſibility of our paſſions, and the jealouſy of our pride, render us open to attacks from all ſides; there is no peace or hope in ourſelves, while we are at the mercy of a troop of covetous and inſatiable deſires, and while we know not how to content this *me*, that is ſo jealous, ſo delicate, and ſo ſuſpicious of every thing that touches it.

Hence it comes to paſs, that in our intercourſe with our neighbour, we are like a ſick man who has languiſhed a long time in bed: there

there is no part of his body but what is sore to the touch: diseased self-love is so softened by itself, it cannot bear to be touched, without crying out. To this delicacy add the rudeness of a neighbour, so full of imperfections, that he does not even know them himself, and likewise the reproaches of that neighbour against our imperfections which are as great as his. Thus do the sons of Adam punish each other: behold in all nations, all towns, all communities, all families, and even between two friends, the martyrdom of self-love.

The remedy by which peace is to be found, is to come out of self. We must renounce it, and sacrifice all self-interest, that we may no longer have any thing more to love, to fear, or to be solicitous about. It is then we taste the true peace reserved for *men of a good will;* that is to say, for such as have no other will but that of God, which becomes theirs. Then men can do no more to us; for they cannot lay hold of us either by our desires or fears. Man has no power against us but what is given him by God, and that power being the will of God, is ours also. In this state we place our treasure so high, that no hand can reach to deprive us of it. They mangle our reputation, but we submit to it; for we know how good it is to be humbled when God humbles us. We are disappointed in friendship; so much the better; he is the only true friend who is jealous of all others, and who detaches us from

them, to render our attachments more pure. We are haraſſed, conſtrained, and reduced to ſubmiſſion, but it is God that does it, and that is ſufficient: we love the hand that bruiſes us, and we find peace in all theſe troubles: bleſſed peace that attends us even to the croſs!

The more perfect our reſignation, the greater will be our peace: if there ſtill remain ſome attachments, and ſome deſires, our peace is imperfect: when all cords are broken, then there is unbounded liberty. Let diſgrace, pain, and death, fall upon me, while I hear Jeſus Chriſt, who ſays to me, *Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that, have no more power that they can do.**

O how weak are they, even when they deprive us of life! Very contracted is that power which can only break an earthen veſſel; that can only kill what of itſelf dies daily: they can haſten a little that death, which is in fact a deliverance; after which we eſcape out of their hands into the boſom of God, where all is permanent peace.

We are in this world only to ſuffer; woe unto thoſe that have their conſolation in this world! They will not find it in the next. This life is the ſeaſon of temptation and trials, to correct, purify, and wean us: when we have no more to ſuffer, we ſhall no longer have occaſion to live; as a patient, when cured, is

* Luke xii. 4

diſcharged

discharged from an hospital: it is only by suffering that our cure is effected.

We must never think of those who disquiet us, but in order to forgive them; we must regard God in them, who makes use of them to exercise our humility, our patience, and our love of the cross. We shall hereafter, in the presence of God, see how useful they have been to us who have crucified us, by nailing us to the cross with Jesus Christ. The pains they cause will soon pass away, but the fruit resulting from them will be everlasting.

On Sensibility in Troubles.

THIS sensibility is, by our great Creator, interwoven in our constitution, in order to exercise our patience and resignation. Let us then enter into his designs. Temptations are necessary for us; but let us remember he always proportions them to our strength. Those within, as well as those that are from without, all tend to crown us with victory, if we are faithful in the combat. Inward temptations are however more useful, as they more immediately humble us, and make us sensible of our inward corruption.—Those from without, serve to shew us the malignity of our neighbour, while those that proceed

from within, make us ſenſible that we are as much depraved in our diſpoſitions as the reſt of the world.

Let us, with a humble confidence, bear the temptations that ſpring from our own heart, as well as the ſtorms we encounter from others. Pride often renders us uneaſy and dejected, at the experience of that inward oppoſition which proceeds from our paſſions: it wiſhes to have all in ſubjection, that it may glory in the combat, and behold with complacency its own perfection.

Let us then endeavour to be faithful, by turning our will entirely to God; let us in all tempeſts commit ourſelves to him, who means to ſhow us by them, the ſhipwrecks to which we ſhould be expoſed, did not his Almighty hand preſerve us in them.

Should our frailty ſo far prevail us to make us voluntarily fall, then let us humble ourſelves, and loſe no time to return to God: but let it be done with calmneſs and reſolution. Let us, when fallen, riſe again, and vigorouſly renew our courſe, without being diſcouraged at the ſight of our folly.

The neceſſity of the Purification of the Soul, with reſpect to the gifts of God.

GOD, though apparently ſo ſevere, never cauſes any to ſuffer for the ſake of ſuffering. He ſtrikes only to heal; the ſeverity of the operation proceeds only from the evil that muſt be taken away: he would make no inciſion if all was ſound.—Judge, therefore, how deep and envenomed muſt our wounds be, ſince God, who is ſo tender to us, cauſes our ſufferings to be ſo ſharp.

Thus as he makes us ſuffer only in order to our cure, ſo he ſometimes deprives us of his gifts, that he may reſtore them to us an hundred fold. Through love he deprives us of the pureſt of his gifts, when we poſſeſs them impurely. The purer our gifts are, the more jealous is he of appropriating or directing them to ourſelves. The moſt eminent graces are the moſt deadly poiſons, if we reſt in them, and regard them with complacency. It is the ſin of the fallen angels; they only turned to themſelves, and regarded with complacency their ſtate; at that inſtant they fell from heaven, and became the enemies of God.

This example ſhows how little men think of thoſe ſins which are the greateſt of all; yet it is very rare to find a ſoul ſo pure as to poſſeſs the gifts of God with purity, without aſſuming a property in them. When they think of God's

God's graces it is for themſelves. They are grieved and dejected when all ſenſible reliſh and perception of grace is taken from them: in ſhort, it is ſelf and not God that engroſſes their thoughts.

From hence it comes to paſs, that all perceptible virtues have need to be purified, becauſe they nouriſh the natural life in us. Corrupt nature can derive food even from thoſe graces that are the moſt contrary to nature: ſelf-love is fed, not only by auſterities and humiliations, by fervent prayer and ſelf-denial, but even by the pureſt ſelf-dereliction, and the greateſt ſacrifices: to complete our purification, we muſt ſacrifice even the gifts of God. This muſt be done before the offering can be perfect; all muſt be given up; we muſt even renounce the perception by which we reflect on having abandoned all.

Man does not find God perfectly, but in the loſs of all his gifts, and in the real ſacrifice of all that belongs to ſelf. We cannot loſe ourſelves totally in God, till all other ſupport fails us.

We ought, therefore, rightly to comprehend the neceſſity of this deprivation of God's grace, which, by degrees, purifies every divine gift; for there is not one, be it ever ſo exalted, that after having been the means of our advancement, does not in the end commonly prove a ſnare and an obſtacle to us, by our imagined property

property in it, which ſullies the ſoul; and for this reaſon God withdraws his favours.

But he takes not away his grace to deprive us of it for ever: he takes it only to reſtore it without that defiling appropriation which we, unknown to ourſelves, had aſſumed in it. The loſs of the gift ſerves to diſcover to us that it was not our own, and being thus undeceived it is reſtored to us an hundred-fold.

Of the internal Operation of God, to bring Man back to the true End of his Creation.

IN the infancy of our ſpiritual life, God exerciſes us, to bring us by degrees from all the creatures that we love too much. But this outward work, although neceſſary for the foundation of the edifice, conſtitutes but a ſmall part of it. The internal work, although inviſible, is the greateſt, moſt difficult, and wonderful.

There comes a time, when God, after having ſtripped us, and mortified us by the creatures to which we were attached, exerciſes us inwardly, in order to draw us from ourſelves. It is not foreign ſupport he then deprives us of, but that very ſelf which was the center of our love; all the reſt we only loved for ſelf, and

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it is this self which God would remove. Cut off the branch of a tree; so far from killing it, you add strength to the sap, and will see it bud with redoubled vigour; but go to the root of it, and it will languish, cast its leaves, and at length die. Thus would God have our old man completely destroyed.

Let no one say, these are vain imaginations. Can they doubt God's immediate operation on the soul? or that he does not so act as to destroy the life of self? Can they doubt that God, after having mortified the grosser passions, does not endeavour to subdue all the subtle windings of self-love, especially in souls generously and without reserve devoted to the spirit of grace? The more he would purify them, the severer are their inward trials. The world can neither see nor understand these trials; the world is blind, its wisdom is foolishness, it cannot agree with the Spirit of Truth; for as the apostle says, *The things of God knoweth no man, but the spirit of God.**

At first they are not accustomed to this inward work, which deprives the soul of every thing. They are very willing to be silent, to leave themselves to the directions of Providence, as a man suffers himself to be carried by the stream: but they are afraid of hearkening to the internal voice that calls them to the sacrifice God has prepared.

* 1 Cor. ii. 11.

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The oppoſition of our own wiſdom and ſelf-love to theſe motions, ſufficiently proves that they are from God, as it is evident that what prevents our obeying them is ſome ſelfiſh ſenſibility. The more we fear to do theſe things the more neceſſary they are: for our fear is owing to delicacy, an untractable humour, or an attachment to earthly views and ſatisfactions; but all theſe ſentiments of the natural life muſt be extinguiſhed. Thus, all pretence for delay is removed by the innocence of the matters in queſtion, and our inward conviction that they will conduce to the deſtruction of ſelf.

A readineſs and compliance in theſe motions is advantageous to the ſoul. Thoſe who have ſtrength enough not to heſitate, ſoon make a wonderful progreſs. Others reaſon, and never fail to find ſome pretences to diſpenſe with their following theſe motions: they would and they would not; they wait for certainties; they ſeek ſuch advice concerning their ſtate, as may free them from doing what they fear to do, and at every ſtep they look behind them: they faint in irreſolution, and inſenſibly drive from them the Spirit of God.

At firſt they grieve him by their heſitations, then provoke him by actual reſiſtance, and laſtly extinguiſh his good motions by reiterated diſobedience. This reſiſtance of grace is always under the cover of divers pretences, which they find to authoriſe it: but inſenſibly they loſe the unction of the Holy One, and the ſimplicity

plicity of faith; and notwithſtanding all their endeavours to deceive themſelves, they are not at peace; they have ſomething at the bottom of their hearts which inceſſantly reproaches them with their neglect of God. But as the conſequence of their neglect is God's withdrawing from them his ſacred checks and inſpirations, ſo the ſoul becomes more hardened; it no longer taſtes true peace; on the contrary, it is every day more alienated from it, by ſeeking it where it is not; it is like a diſlocated bone, which, though always painful while out of its proper place, yet does not endeavour to regain it; but, on the contrary, fixes itſelf in its wrong ſituation.

On Chriſtian Perfection.

CHRISTIAN Perfection has not in it that ſeverity and reſtraint we may imagine. It indeed requires that we ſhould devote ourſelves to God from the bottom of our hearts; but then when we are thus devoted unto God, all that we do for him becomes eaſy. Thoſe that with undivided hearts thus live to God are always content; for they will nothing but what he wills, and would do all for him that he would have them do; they part with every thing for his

his ſake, and receive from him an hundred fold reward.

Peace of conſcience, the ſweetneſs of being reſigned to God, the joy ariſing from the increaſing light of God in their ſouls; and finally, a freedom from the fears and tyrannizing paſſions of the world, conſtitute that hundred fold of happineſs which the true children of God poſſeſs in the midſt of croſſes, if they are but faithful.

Happy the man who thus gives himſelf to God. He is delivered from his paſſions, from the raſh judgments of men, their malevolence, and the tyranny of their maxims; from the inconſtancy of friends, the ſnares and artifices of enemies, from his own weakneſs, from the ſorrows of life, from the horrors of a wicked death, from the cruel remorſe ariſing from criminal pleaſures; and laſtly, from the eternal condemnation of God.

The Chriſtian is delivered from a multitude of evils; ſeeing, that by placing his will in the hands of God, he wills no more than God wills: and thus he finds his conſolation through faith, and hope, in the midſt of all his ſufferings.

Happy they who, with fixed faith, reſign themſelves into the arms of the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort, as he is called by St. Paul: then they deſire nothing more than to know what they owe to God; and they fear nothing ſo much as not to ſee what he

he requires. When they receive freſh light from his law, they rejoice as a miſer who has found a treaſure.

The true Chriſtian reſigns himſelf to all the calamities that Providence is pleaſed to afflict him with; wills all that happens to him, and never wiſhes for what he has not: the more he loves God, the greater is his contentment; and the higheſt degree of perfection, far from oppreſſing him, renders his burden the lighter.

O the folly of fearing to be too much devoted to God! It is fearing to be too happy; it is fearing to be in all things too much attached to the will of God; it is fearing to ſupport with too much fortitude our inevitable croſſes; to derive too much conſolation from the love of God; and to be too much diſengaged from thoſe paſſions that render us miſerable.

Let us then diſpiſe all earthly things, that we may be entirely at the diſpoſal of God. I do not ſay that we ſhould part with them abſolutely: for when our lives are regular and honeſt, there is little more to be done, than to change the inward affections of our ſouls: externally our actions will be nearly the ſame; for God does not ſubvert the different conditions of life, nor require us to abandon thoſe employments in which he himſelf has placed us: the chief difference will conſiſt in this, that we ſhall now do to pleaſe God, what we formerly did to pleaſe the world and ourſelves, and inſtead of being carried away by our pride,

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our tyrannic paſſions, and the malicious cenſures of the world, we ſhall, on the contrary, act with freedom, courage, and confidence in God: our hope will animate us; we ſhall be ſupported in the midſt of all our diſtreſſes, by the expectation of that everlaſting happineſs which daily approaches, while all earthly joys paſs quickly from us: the love of God will make us ſenſible of his love for us, give us ſtrength to walk in his ways, and raiſe us above all calamities: If this is difficult to be believed, experience will convince us of it; *Come, taſte and ſee*, ſays David, *how gracious the Lord is.**

The Son of God ſays to all, without exception, " *If any man will be my diſciple, let him take up his croſs and follow me;*† the broad way leadeth to deſtruction; we muſt walk in the ſtrait way, where the few are to be found. None but ſuch as lay great reſtraint on themſelves, can win the kingdom of heaven. They muſt be born again, become as little children, renounce themſelves, be poor in ſpirit, mourn in order to be comforted, and be no longer of this world, which is condemned becauſe of offences.

Theſe truths offend many people, becauſe they ſee plainly what religion requires, without knowing what it beſtows; and they are ignorant of that ſpirit of love which eaſy every burden. They know that this religion leads

* Pſalm xxxiv. 6. † Matthew xvi. 24.

us

us to the higheſt perfection, by giving us, through the love of God, a peace which ſoftens all the calamities of life.

Thoſe that with undivided hearts devote themſelves to God, they prove the truth of this divine ſaying, that *the yoke of Jeſus Chriſt is eaſy, his burden light*, that in him *the ſoul finds reſt*, and that, according to his promiſe, *he refreſhes all that are weary and heavy laden.*

But what woe attends thoſe ſlothful and timorious ſouls that are divided between God and the world! They are unſtable and irreſolute. They are afraid both of the judgment of God and of man; they are terrified at the evil, and aſhamed of the good; they have the ſufferings of virtue, without taſting its conſolations. O! if they had courage to deſpiſe the vain diſcourſe, inſipid railleries, and raſh cenſures of men, what peace would they taſte in the boſom of their God?

How dangerous to our ſalvation, how hurtful to the peace of our minds, is it to wiſh to linger here? Our whole life is only given us, that we may proceed with haſty ſtep towards our heavenly country: the world vaniſhes as a vain ſhadow, and eternity advances to receive us: whilſt the light of the Father of mercies ſhines on us, let us haſten to arrive at the heavenly Canaan.

The firſt commandment is, "Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy ſoul, with all thy ſtrength, and with all

all thy mind." Now, how can any one think he loves God, if he does not meditate on his law, and apply himſelf to the accompliſhment of his will?

Thoſe who are afraid to ſee too clearly what his will requires, are far from this watchful and attentive love. There is but one way of loving God, which is not to take any ſtep but with him and for him, and to follow with a grateful heart all his inſpirations.

Thoſe who are under pious reſtraints, but yet would gladly follow the world a little, thinking that to do ſo is but a trifle, are in great danger of being of the number of thoſe lukewarm Chriſtians, of whom the Spirit ſays, that God will *ſpew them out of his mouth.**

God is diſpleaſed with ſuch ſlothful ſervants as ſay in their hearts, thus far will I go, but no further; does it belong to the creature to ſet bounds to the Creator? What would a maſter ſay to his ſervant, or a king to his ſubjects, who were fearful of being devoted too much to his ſervice or intereſt, and who would blaſh to have their attachment appear to the world? What then ſhall the King of kings ſay, if we imitate theſe baſe ſervants? The time approaches, when we ſhall be called to account; it will ſoon arrive, let us haſten to prevent it; let us love the everlaſting beauty which never decays, nor will ſuffer ſuch as love it to decay.

* Rev. iii. 16.

Have

Have we not seen within these few years, persons in the most exalted stations, surprised by death, and sunk into the everlasting abyss? This world to which we are so much attached, we are just on the point of leaving; and what is it in itself, but vanity and folly? It is a phantom, and the *fashion of it*, as St. Paul says, *passeth away.**

The way of Faith is better, and more secure than that of Lights and sensible Retishes.

THOSE who are attached to God only, so far as he affords them pleasure and consolation, resemble those people, who followed Jesus Christ not for his doctrine, but for the loaves which he miraculously multiplied. They say with Peter, *Lord, it is good for us to be here, let us build three tabernacles:* but they know not what they say. After being delighted with the sweetness of Mount Tabor, they forsake the Son of God, and refuse to follow him up to mount Calvary. They not only seek for sensible tastes, but also for extraordinary lights: that is to say, the understanding is desirous to see, while the heart wishes to be moved by soft and flattering sensations. Is this to die to self? Is this to live by faith?

* 1 Cor. vii. 31.

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They would feel, taſte, and poſſeſs God and his graces; they would penetrate into the hearts of others, dive into futurity, and become quite extraordinary; for as eagerneſs for lights and ſenſations, by degrees brings a ſoul to the ſecret deſire of all theſe things.

The Apoſtle ſhews us a more excellent way, by which he excites in us an holy emulation; when ſpeaking of charity, he ſays, *it ſeeketh not its own*;* it is not the pleaſure it ſeeks, but God, and the accompliſhment of his will. If it finds a ſweet ſenſibility in prayer, it makes a tranſitory uſe of it to aſſiſt its weakneſs without reſting in it. What would become of us, if we were always to remain children, hanging at the breaſt of heavenly conſolations? We muſt, as St. Paul ſays, *Put away childiſh things*;† the firſt fervors were good to attract us, to detach us from groſs and worldly pleaſures, by others more pure and elevated; and laſtly, to accuſtom us to a life of prayer and recollection.

But to taſte a delicious pleaſure which obliterates the idea of the groſs, and to enjoy a fervor which makes us live as if Paradiſe was already open to us, is not to be crucified and die to ourſelves.

He who has no other ſupport, will abandon prayer when that ſource of pleaſure is dried up. Many people leave off to pray when their prayer becomes moſt profitable. How many ſouls, who, becauſe when children in Jeſus

* 1 Cor. xiii. 5. † 1 Cor. xiii. 11.

Chriſt, they were too tender, and too much truſting on this ſweet milk, fall back and forſake the inward life from the time that God begins to help them? Nor need we wonder they conſidered that as a ſanctuary which is but the outer court of the temple; they would mortify the outward ſenſes, to live internally with more delight to themſelves. From hence proceed ſo many miſtakes even amongſt thoſe ſouls, apparently the moſt fervent and abſtracted. Even ſuch as have ſpoke much of dying to ſelf, and parting with all, are frequently the moſt diſcouraged in the day of trial, when all ſenſible conſolation is withdrawn. O how good it is to believe without ſeeing, and to be contented in the midſt of poverty.

From an attachment to ſenſible taſtes proceeds an illuſion: we are much miſtaken if we imagine this ſenſibility to be an evidence of ſecurity. On the contrary, it often occaſions a falling off; it is a flattering bait to ſelf-love. They fear not to be deficient in their duty to God, while this ſpiritual delight laſts. They *ſay in their proſperity, I ſhall never be moved:** but when this rapture is over, they think all loſt; thus they are too apt to put their own ſenſibility in the place of God. Nothing preſerves us from illuſion but a pure faith. When we rely not on extraordinary lights, but God alone in a pure faith, receiving the conſolations that are given, but never reſting in any,

* Pſalm xxx. 6.

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not judging but always obeying; ſenſible we may be eaſily deceived; acting with ſimplicity and a good intention, then are we in the way furtheſt from deluſion.

On the True Light.

JESUS Chriſt is *the light of every man that cometh into the world.** As there is but one ſun that illuminates all bodies in the univerſe, ſo there is but one light that enlighteneth all ſouls. This light is Jeſus Chriſt, the eternal word of God. O how miſerably blind are all who imagine themſelves wiſe, while they continue deſtitute of that wiſdom which Jeſus Chriſt inſpires! Revelation appears to them like a dream; the goſpel is preached to all ranks of people, but they comprehend it not. Its wiſdom is called fooliſhneſs.

O vain and fooliſh world, is it in thee that we ſhould truſt? Thou art but a mere illuſion, and yet thou wouldſt have us confide in thee! We find that in poſſeſſing thee, thou haſt nothing ſubſtantial wherewithal to ſatisfy our hearts. When thou offereſt thyſelf to us with a ſmiling countenance, it occaſions troubles.

* John i. 9.

When every thing is ready to disappear, thou presumest to promise us happiness: but he alone is truly happy, who, by the light of Jesus Christ, discovers thy emptiness.

On the Presence of God.

THE principal instrument or means of our perfection, is contained in this expression of God to Abraham, *Walk before me, and be thou perfect*;* the presence of God calms the mind, and gives sweet repose and quiet even in the midst of our daily labours; but then we must be resigned to him without any reserve. It does not require a great deal of time to love God, to draw near unto him and enjoy his presence, to lift up our hearts to him, or adore him at the bottom of them, nor to make him an offering of all we do and suffer; this is the true *kingdom of God within us*,† which nothing can disturb.

When the rovings of the imagination hinder us from possessing a quiet and peaceful frame of mind, let us at least calm ourselves by the integrity of our will; and the desire of a composure does in a manner prove a sufficient one;

* Gen. xvii. 1. † Luke xvii. 21.

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we muſt alſo turn our minds inward to God, and do whatſoever he would have us with an upright intention.

Let us take care that we be not voluntarily occupied too long, either outwardly or inwardly, about things which create ſuch diſtraction of heart and mind, as draw both the one and the other ſo much out of themſelves, that it is with difficulty they can return to find God.

As ſoon as we feel that ſome foreign object gives us too much pleaſure and delight, let us withdraw our heart from it: if we are but faithful, even in a ſmall degree, inwardly to preclude the creatures, ſo that they may not reſt in the heart, which God has reſerved for himſelf, there to dwell, and there to be loved and honoured, we ſhall quickly taſte that pure joy, which he never fails to give a ſoul that is free and diſengaged from worldly affections.

When we perceive in ourſelves ſtrong deſires after any thing, be it what it will, and find that our inclination carries us too precipitately towards it, though it be only to ſay ſomewhat, to ſee ſomething, or go any where; let us ſtrive to moderate ourſelves, and requeſt of God, that he would ſtay the precipitation of our thoughts, and the commotion we are under; for he himſelf has ſaid, his Spirit abides not in hurry and tumult.

Let us be careful not to concern ourſelves too much with what others ſay or do, and that

we let it not enter too much into our minds; for it is a great cauſe of diſturbance. As ſoon as we perceive what it is that God requires of us in any particular, let us adhere to that; by this means we ſhall preſerve a freedom and evenneſs of ſoul, and retrench many needleſs things, which embarraſs the mind, and hinder it from turning to God.

An excellent means of keeping ourſelves in an inward quiet, and freedom of ſpirit, is, at the concluſion of every action to lay aſide all reflections ariſing from it, dropping all regards of ſelf-love, ariſing from vain joy or grief. Happy the man who retains nothing in his mind but what is neceſſary, and who only thinks of each thing juſt when it is the time to think of it: ſo that it is rather God who excites the perception and idea of it by a diſcovery of his will, than the mind's being at the trouble to find it. Let us accuſtom ourſelves to have our minds inwardly recollected during the day, and in the courſe of our employments, by looking ſingly to God. Let us ſever ourſelves from every thing that comes not from God, put away all vain thoughts and wild imaginations, and ſpeak no idle word. Let us ſeek God within us, and we ſhall infallibly find him, and with him joy and peace.

In our outward occupations, let us be employed more with God than any thing elſe; to perform them rightly, we muſt perform them as in his preſence, and for his ſake. At a view

of

of God's majeſty, a calmneſs and ſerenity ſhould poſſeſs the ſoul. One word of our Saviour heretofore calmed a boiſterous and raging ſea, and now one look of Him towards us, and of us towards Him, will ſtill daily do the ſame.

We muſt often lift up our hearts to God; he will purify, enlighten, and direct them. It was the daily practice of David, who ſays, *I have always ſet God before me.** Let us frequently repeat the following expreſſions of his: *Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none upon earth that I deſire in compariſon of thee. God is the ſtrength of my heart, and my portion for ever.*†

We need not ſtay for leiſure hours to ſhut the door, and retire; for whenever we regret the want of retirement, it is enough to introduce us into it: even when at meals, or while others are talking, unprofitable diſcourſes inſtead of tiring may relieve us, by affording ſome interval of inward retirement. Thus all things are converted into good to thoſe who love God.

We ſhould frequently read ſuch books as are proper for our ſtate and condition, and in reading make ſome pauſes to leave room for the ſpirit to act, that inwardly draws the mind to recollection. A few ſimple words, but full of the Spirit of God, are the hidden manna: and

* Pſ. xvi. 9. † Pſ. lxxiii. 25, 26.

though we forget the words, yet they operate ſecretly, ſo that the ſoul is fed and nouriſhed by them.

On Conformity to the Will of God.

ALL virtue conſiſts in the rectitude of the will. This is what Jeſus Chriſt would have us underſtand by theſe words: *The kingdom of God is within you.** He does not require great knowledge, great talents, nor great actions; all that is neceſſary is, that we ſhould have an heart to love God.

The ſpiritual life is the commencement of the bleſſed peace of the ſaints, who always ſay, Amen, to the diſpenſations of Providence. They praiſe, they bleſs God in every thing; they ſee him in all things, and his paternal hand is the ſole object they regard. There are no more evils, for even the moſt painful that can happen, *work together for good*, as St. Paul ſays, *to thoſe that love God.* Can we call thoſe afflictions evils which God ſends to purify us, and make us worthy of him? That which is beneficial to us, cannot be called an evil.

* Luke xvii. 21.

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Let us then caſt all our cares into the boſom of ſo good a Father. Let us leave it to him to do as he pleaſes. Let us be content to follow his will in every thing, and let our will be perfectly reſigned to his. The only thing which is truly ours is our will; but then it is that of which God is jealous; for he has given it to us, not that we may remain proprietors of it, but that we ſhould return it to him entire, without retaining any part of it.

Alas! how many ſouls are there proprietors of themſelves, who are willing to ſerve God and love him, but then it muſt be according to their own will and ſelf-direction; they would have God obſerve the rules which they preſcribe to him with regard to his manner of drawing them to himſelf; they would ſerve him, but they would not give themſelves up to him. When they appear full of zeal and fervour, their ſpiritual abundance becomes an obſtacle to them, as they find a propriety even in their own virtues, and are continually ſeeking themſelves in the exerciſe of them. The ſoul that is truly mortified, and dead to the life of ſelf, that renounces its own will, that it may will only as God would have it, is ſuperiour to ſuch fervent and enlightened ſouls as would proceed in the path of virtue according to their own way.

This is the deep ſenſe of the words of Jeſus Chriſt, *Whoever will be my diſciple, let him deny*

*himself, and follow me.** We must follow Christ step by step, and not open a way for ourselves to him. We can follow him no other way but by renouncing ourselves. Thus St. Paul tells us, *Ye are not your own.* Woe to him who resumes what he has already devoted. Let us then beseech the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, to take away a disposition to please ourselves, without suffering the smallest part to be retained by us! Such an operation will cost us dear: we shall find it difficult to let God act when he wounds us in the most sensible part. But here is the patience of the saints, and the sacrifice of pure faith, to be experienced.

Let us leave it to God to work in us all his good pleasure, without resisting him. When we perceive the revolt of nature and our senses, let us with confidence turn to God, and join with him against our slothful and rebellious nature; let us deliver it up to the Spirit of God, and he will by degrees destroy it. Let us, in his presence, watch over our smallest defects, that we may not grieve the Holy Spirit; let the faults we commit turn to our profit, by causing us humbly to reflect on our own frailty, without rendering us over much dejected.

The kingdom of God is indeed come in us, when, independently of all outward helps, we regard nothing but the hand of God alone as the doer of all. To be willing to serve him in

* Matt. xvi. 24.

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one place more than another, or in ſuch or ſuch a way rather than the contrary, is to ſerve him after our own manner, and not after his. But to be equally ready in all, to deſire and will only in conformity to him, to leave ourſelves into the hands of Providence, and to ſet no bounds to our ſubmiſſion, is to ſerve him with true ſelf-renunciation.

Inſtructions how to obtain internal Peace.

O HOW different is the peace of God from that which the world can beſtow! It calms the paſſions, preſerves the purity of our conſcience, and is inſeparable from righteouſneſs, unites us with God, and fortifies us againſt temptations; and when temptations do not overcome us, they always yield good fruit.

A true ſimplicity; a tranquillity of the mind, which is the fruit of reſignation to the will of God; a patience with regard to the defects of our neighbour, which the preſence of God inſpires us with; a willingneſs to confeſs our faults, and be reprehended for them; alſo to ſubmit ourſelves to the advice of experienced perſons; theſe are virtues uſeful and neceſſary to our ſanctification.

The pain thou experienceſt with regard to ſeveral things, ariſing from thy not receiving with ſufficient reſignation, all that can happen to thee; leave then all things in the hands of God. When thou giveſt up thyſelf entirely to God, thou wilt find thyſelf at peace, and full of the joy of the Holy Ghoſt. Woe to thee, if in the work of God thou expecteſt aſſiſtance from man! The leaſt reſpect to any thing that is human, extinguiſhes grace, and increaſes thy irreſolution.

How can we refuſe to give up our whole hearts to God, who has loved us from the beginning, and loved us with the tenderneſs of a father, who pities us as his children, who is ſenſible of our weakneſs, and knoweth whereof we are made? He has followed us in our ways, which are thoſe of ſin; he has run after us, as a ſhepherd in ſearch of his ſtrayed ſheep. We may ſay, he loved us even to the death of the croſs, and that the meaſure of his obedience was that of his love. When that love fills the ſoul, it taſtes the ſweets of a peaceful conſcience; it is content; it wants neither grandeur, reputation, nor pleaſure; it wills only what God wills, and watches in the bleſſed expectation of the bridegroom's coming.

On being reſigned to God.

OF all the bleſſings we have occaſion to ſeek for in retirement, the principal is the peace of ſimplicity, which never regards futurity with ſolicitude. The future is not ours, but God's, and he will ſo order it as to be ſuitable to our neceſſities: but if, through our own wiſdom, we endeavour to dive into that futurity, the only fruit of our inquiries will be uneaſineſs! Let us, therefore, think of nothing but how we may make a good uſe of the preſent day: each day has its good and its evil, in ſuch a manner that the evil is often converted into good, provided we are faithful, and ſuffer God to act without our preventing him by our own impatience.

God will give ſufficient time and opportunity to draw near unto him. He will not, perhaps, give us all that we may deſire, that we may employ ourſelves according to our own inclination, and ſo live to ſelf, under the pretence of perfection; but we ſhall not want either time or opportunity to renounce ourſelves and our own inclinations. All other time is loſt, though it may ſeem to be well employed.

Be perſuaded alſo, that in all theſe things we ſhall find whatever is ſuitable to our real wants: for ſo far as God diſconcerts our inclinations, ſo far does he ſupport our weakneſs. Let us ſuffer him to act in us. Avoid only, by a regular and tranquil employment, all melancholy

choly and impatience, which are the moſt dangerous temptations nature is liable to.

Of intereſted and diſintereſted Love.

SUCH ſouls as are really detached from themſelves, like the ſaints in heaven, regard the mercies diſtributed to others, with the ſame complacency as thoſe they receive themſelves: for eſteeming themſelves as nothing, they love the good pleaſure of God, the riches of his grace, and the glory he derives from the ſanctification of others, as much as that he derives from them. All is then equal; for the Me is loſt, the Me is no more Me than another perſon: it is God alone that is all in all: it is him they love and admire, who cauſes all the joy of their hearts by this diſintereſted love.

But there are many pious perſons that remain in ſome degree attached to ſelf. Theſe remains of ſelf-love ſerve even to ſupport them in the practice of virtue, and to purify them to a certain degree. Nothing could be more dangerous, than to deprive them of this comforting conſideration of the graces of God, with regard to their own perfection.

Concerning Amuſements.

WHEN amuſements are innocent in themſelves, it is ſufficient if we partake of them with moderation, and as in the preſence of God. Manners ſtiff and reſerved can only ſerve to give a falſe idea of piety to the people of the world, who are already too much prejudiced againſt it, and who imagine they cannot ſerve God but by a ſad and melancholy life.

Let us walk with ſimplicity in peace and joy, which are the fruits of the Holy Ghoſt. He who walks in the preſence of God is, even on indifferent occaſions, doing the work of God, though he appear to be doing nothing important. I always ſuppoſe that we are under the direction of God, and that we act conformably to his providence, by doing even the moſt indifferent things in that ſtate in which he has placed us.

Moſt people, on becoming converts, or reforming their lives, think more of performing extraordinary and difficult actions, than of purifying their intentions, and dying to their natural inclinations on the moſt common occaſions; by which means they are frequently deceived. When our lives are honeſt and regular, we become Chriſtians more ſpeedily, by altering that which is within, than that which is without. God is not content either with the ſound of the lips, the poſture of the body, or outward ceremonies

ceremonies. What he requires is an undivided will, that neither desires nor rejects any thing; that wills, without reserve, all that he wills; and never wills, under any pretence whatever, in contrariety to him.

Let us carry then, wherever Providence conducts us, a will full of simplicity, and united to God. Seek God in those hours which appear void of good, and they will not be so to us, for God will support us in them. O the ease of heart that is experienced, when God opens this path of simplicity! We then walk like little children, whom their mother leads by the hand, and who suffer themselves to be conducted by her. We are content to be in subjection, or content to be free. We are willing to speak, or to be silent

Let us remember that even our virtues, in the exercise of them, require to be purified by the disappointments Providence throws in our way, the better to detach us from all self-will. O how simple, amiable, discreet, and secure in all its ways is piety, when its corner-stone is submission to the will of God, without consulting either our taste, our temper, or the sallies of an immoderate zeal! We live almost like other people, without affectation, or the appearance of austerity, in a sociable manner; but in a constant submission to all the duties of our calling, in a renunciation of every thing that is contrary to the will of God, with a pure view to him, to whom we must sacrifice all the irregular emo-

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tions of nature. This is the adoration in ſpirit and in truth, which Jeſus Chriſt and his Father ſeek. Every thing elſe is but a religion of ceremony, and rather the ſhadow than the ſubſtance of real Chriſtianity.

It may be aſked, by what means is this purity of intention to be attained, in a life expoſed to the bad examples and converſation of the world? I anſwer, Reading and prayer will be helpful to lay the foundation of our ſecurity. By reading, I do not here mean ſuch as tends only to ſatisfy curioſity, and make us knowing on religious ſubjects; the reading I recommend is what is ſimple, ſuch as may be reduced to practice, and tends to nouriſh the heart. When we read not to increaſe our knowledge, but to know better how to be diffident of ourſelves, then will our reading be truly advantageous to us. To reading, prayer ſhould be added, in which we may ſilently meditate on ſome great truths of religion. And when we perceive our thoughts to wander in this exerciſe, recall them gently, without being diſcouraged at the importunity of theſe diſtractions. While they are involuntary, they cannot hurt us: on the contrary, they will be of more uſe than a prayer accompanied with ſenſible conſolation and fervour; for they will tend to humble and mortify us, and accuſtom us to ſeek God purely for himſelf, without conſidering too much our own pleaſure: provided we conſtantly withdraw night and morning to practiſe

tiſe theſe things, we ſhall find them an antidote againſt the dangers that ſurround us. I ſay night and morning, becauſe the nouriſhment of the ſoul, as well as that of the body, muſt be continually renewed, to prevent its falling into decay, and being waſted by its continual intercourſe with men. But we muſt be reſolute both againſt ourſelves and others, to reſerve the time allotted for this purpoſe; nor muſt we ſuffer ourſelves to be drawn away by outward occupations, ſo as to loſe the time that is to nouriſh our ſouls.

It is alſo neceſſary to ſet apart certain days for retirement and recollection; when, as at the feet of Jeſus, we may obtain a remedy for all the wounds of our heart, and have all the malignant maxims and opinions of the world effaced. This is even ſerviceable to our health: for provided we know how, with ſimplicity, to make the beſt uſe of theſe ſhort retirements, they will conduce to the health of the body, as well as the ſoul.

As to amuſements, they ought to be agreeable to our profeſſion of piety, and the good example the world expects from us. For the world, immerſed as it is in itſelf, would not have ſuch as deſpiſe it, act contrary to the contempt they have for it; nor can it avoid eſteeming thoſe, by whom it ſees itſelf to be of ſmall eſtimation. True Chriſtians have cauſe to be thankful that the world is ſo ſevere a cenſor; for by this means they are under the greateſt

greateſt neceſſity of doing nothing that is unedifying.

If we perceive ourſelves dejected with ſorrow, or elated by pleaſure, we muſt, without uneaſineſs, return to our heavenly Father, with whom we may expect to find joy and freedom in our ſorrow, moderation and recollection in our joy, and may rely on not being diſappointed. The turning of our hearts to him will reanimate us; and though we ſhould perceive our ſouls dull and diſcouraged when God ſets us on any work, he will give reſolution and a facility in the diſcharge of our duty ſuitable to our neceſſity. This is the daily bread we conſtantly aſk for, and which will never fail us; for our Father, far from forſaking us, deſires to find our hearts open, that he may bleſs us.

We muſt not wait for outward liberty and retirement to be detached from the world, and to overcome the old man; the thought of a free ſtate is no more than a pleaſing idea; it may never be our lot. We ſhould be ready to die in our preſent ſervitude. Providence may prevent our projects of retirement: we are not in our own power. The Iſraelites, in Babylon, ſighed after Jeruſalem, yet how few of them ever ſaw Jeruſalem more, but ended their days in Babylon! What an illuſion would it have been, if they had deferred, till their return to their own country, to worſhip the true God, and to perfect themſelves. Perhaps our ſtate may reſemble that of the Iſraelites.

On the Employment of our Time.

IT is true, notwithſtanding the progreſs ſome have made, much remains to be done: a perſuaſion of the mind, or even a good diſpoſition of the heart, is at a great diſtance from an exact and faithful practice. Nothing has been more common at all times than to meet with people perfect and holy, as far as ſpeculation goes. The Saviour of the world ſays, *Ye ſhall know them by their fruits.** And this is the only rule that does not deceive us, provided it be rightly diſcovered; it is by this rule we ſhould judge ourſelves.

A general means of employing our time well, is to accuſtom ourſelves to live in a conſtant dependance on the Spirit of God, receiving what he is pleaſed to give us; conſulting him in our doubts, when we muſt always be ready to obey his dictates; having recourſe to him in our weakneſſes; invoking him, and raiſing our hearts to him, when drawn away by outward objects, it ſees itſelf carried inſenſibly out of the road, and is ſurprized into forgetfulneſs and ſeparation from God.

For the well employing our hours of buſineſs, it is ſufficient that we attend with ſimplicity to the mandates of the Divine Providence. We ſhould take care not to be overwhelmed by a

* Matt. vii. 16.

multiplicity

multiplicity of occupations, be they what they will.

We muſt endeavour to begin all our undertakings with a view to the glory of God, to continue them without diſſipation, and to end them without hurry.

The time of entertainment (or what may be called relaxation) is the moſt dangerous to ourſelves, and perhaps the moſt uſeful to others: it is then more eſpecially we ſhould be upon our guard; that is to ſay, moſt faithful as to perceiving the preſence of God. The Chriſtian watchfulneſs ſo much recommended by our Lord; not only habitual, but as much as poſſible, actual aſpirations and elevations of the mind and heart to God, by thoſe ſimple views which faith inſpires; the ſweet and peaceful dependance which the ſoul ſhould have with regard to grace, acknowledging it as the only principle of its ſecurity and ſtrength; all theſe things are now to be put in practice, to preſerve us from the ſubtle poiſon which is frequently hid under pleaſures and amuſements, and to know how to conduct ourſelves wiſely, in ſuch things as may inſtruct and edify others. This is eſpecially neceſſary for men and women in eminent ſtations, whoſe words and behaviour may frequently be the cauſe of much good or evil.

Our vacant hours are generally the moſt pleaſing and uſeful to ourſelves; we can ſcarcely employ

employ them better than by conſecrating them to the renewing of our ſtrength, (I may even ſay our bodily ſtrength) by a ſecret and intimate communication with God.

Prayer is ſo neceſſary, and the ſource of ſo many bleſſings, that the ſoul who has found this treaſure, cannot avoid having recourſe to it whenever it is left to itſelf.

I have other things to ſay to you on thoſe three portions of our time; perhaps I may hereafter mention them, if the views which at preſent ſtrike me do not vaniſh; however, if they do, the loſs is but ſmall; God gives us new views when he pleaſes; if he does not, it is a ſign they are not neceſſary; and when they are not neceſſary for our advantage, we ſhould rejoice in their being loſt.

MEDITATIONS

ON

VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.

1 John ii. 15.

THESE are words of great extent. The world is nothing more than a multitude of people who love themſelves, and who love the creatures without reſpect to God. The deſire of authority, the love of a reputation we do not merit, diſſipation in company, the ſeeking ſuch things as gratify our ſenſes, ſloth, and remiſſneſs in all Chriſtian exerciſes, and a want of application in ſtudying the truths of the goſpel; all theſe things are the fruits of the world. It lives in us, we deſire its love, and dread its neglect. Bleſſed was that apoſtle to whom

whom the world was crucified, and he unto the world.

It is true the world promiſes peace, but then it never gives it; it affords ſome tranſitory pleaſures, but they coſt more than they are worth. Jeſus Chriſt alone can give peace to man; he reconciles him to himſelf; he ſubdues his paſſions; he ſets bounds to his deſires; he comforts him in his love, and gives him, even in the midſt of pain, a joy which cannot be taken from him.

We wiſh to love God, and yet are afraid of diſpleaſing the world, which is his enemy. Do we not know that the friendſhip of the world makes us enemies to God? Woe then to thoſe who pleaſe the world, that blind and corrupt judge. It is not ſufficient, according to the apoſtle, that the world ſhould be crucified to us, but we muſt alſo be crucified unto it.—People are apt to imagine themſelves far from the world, becauſe they live retired; but they ſpeak its language, and have the ſame ſentiments and delicacies; they have the ſame deſire of reputation, friendſhip, and amuſements; they bear with pain the ſmalleſt humiliation. They ſay, they would willingly forget the world, but yet feel in the bottom of their heart, that they would not be forgotten by it, but vainly do they ſeek to compromiſe matters between Jeſus Chriſt and the world.

There

There are laſt which ſhall be firſt, and there are firſt which ſhall be laſt.

Luke xiii. 30.

HOW many ſinners are there, who, after having wandered many years in ignorance of the Truth, ſhall, by the fervour of their penitence, leave thoſe behind them, who have, from their earlieſt youth, taſted the gifts of the Holy Spirit; and whom God has prevented by his ſweeteſt benedictions? How glorious will it be to thoſe who were laſt, thus to bear away the crown, and be, by their example, a condemnation to others? But how grievous will it be to the firſt to become laſt, to ſee themſelves left behind by thoſe to whom they were formerly a model, to loſe their crowns, and to loſe them for the ſake of ſome trivial amuſements which retarded their progreſs! I cannot obſerve the recollection of ſome perſons, their diſintereſtedneſs and humility, without bluſhing to ſee how much we are diſſipated, vain, and attached to temporal conveniences. Let us haſte to run, leſt we be left behind.

That we are made to serve one another.

I came not to be miniſtered unto, but to miniſter.
Matth. x. 45.

THIS is what ought to be ſaid by all people who have authority over others; it is nothing more than a miniſterial office, and we ſhould in reality ſerve thoſe we ſeem to command: we ſhould bear their imperfections, endeavour with mildneſs and patience to correct them, wait for them in the ways of God, believe ourſelves ſent for their advantage, humble ourſelves to ſoften the neceſſary diſciplines, and beg of God to change their hearts, which is a grace they could not obtain for themſelves. Let us examine ourſelves with regard to ſuch as are committed to our care, and for whom we ſhall be called to an account before God.

Of Meekneſs, and Lowlineſs of Heart.

Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.
Matth. xi. 29.

IT is the Son of God alone who can teach us this divine leſſon; *He, who being equal with God,*

*God, made himſelf of no reputation, but took upon him the form of a ſervant, and was made in the likeneſs of men.** What has he not done for the love of us? What has he not ſuffered for us, and what does he not ſtill continue to ſuffer? *He was led as a lamb to the ſlaughter, yet opened he not his mouth.*† And we, notwithſtanding, complain of the ſlighteſt ills; are vain, delicate, and eaſily affected.

There is no real meekneſs without lowlineſs of heart: whilſt we are full of ourſelves, every thing we ſee in others will offend us; but when we are thoroughly perſuaded that nothing is due to us, then nothing will diſturb us. Let us often think of our own failings, and we ſhall become indulgent to thoſe of others. Let us often think of theſe important words of the Son of God, *Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart.*

On true Greatneſs.

Whoſoever exalteth himſelf ſhall be abaſed, and he that humbleth himſelf ſhall be exalted.

Luke xiv. 11.

SINCE we are ſo fond of being exalted, let us ſeek it where it is to be found, and

* Phil. ii. 6, 7. † Iſaiah liii. 7.

 where

where its exiſtence will be eternal. Let us aſpire to true greatneſs, which is only to be found by abaſing ourſelves in this world. God confounds the proud; in this life, he ſends him many croſs accidents, and in the end will humble him for ever; but the humble, who deſires to live in obſcurity, ſhall be reſpected, becauſe he never deſired to be ſo; and an everlaſting glory ſhall be the reward of his contempt of a falſe glory.

On what we ought to found our Joy.

Rejoice in the Lord alway; and again I ſay, rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men; the Lord is at hand.

Phil. iv. 4, 5.

IT is our being diſguſted with our paſſions and the vanities of the world, which ought to be the ſource of our joy; it ſhould be founded on our confidence in God; and we muſt not hope to be agreeable to him, but ſo far as the world is diſpleaſing to us. It is our expectation of Jeſus Chriſt, that ought to render us moderate and perſevering; we ſhould be always ready to receive him, and rejoice at his coming: for he cometh to judge the world, and to be our comforter.

How

How ſweet is it to expect the coming of Chriſt, whilſt the children of this world are afraid of it! They ſhall tremble, whilſt his followers, with joy and confidence, ſhall behold the coming of their gracious deliverer. Bleſſed ſtate! Let thoſe who have not attained it, aſpire after it. We are prevented from being in this ſtate of confidence and conſolation by our ſloth and vain amuſements.

Of Confidence in God.

I ſleep, but my heart waketh. Cant. v. 2.

WE ſleep in peace in the boſom of our God, by committing ourſelves to his providence, and by a ſweet remembrance of his mercy. Why do we ſtill entertain doubtful and uneaſy reaſonings, and are impatient to change our ſituation? The place where we are is the boſom of God: for he has placed us there with his own hands. Can we be uneaſy where he hath put us, and where we are like a child embraced by its mother? Let us repoſe ourſelves on him, and in him. This confidence, which extinguiſhes all the motions of carnal wiſdom, is the true watchfulneſs of the heart. To commit ourſelves to God, without depending

on any thing but him, is to make our heart wake, while we ſleep. Thus the eyes of love will always be open, that they may look at their well-beloved; and we ſhall not ſleep the ſleep of death.

On the Defects of others.

Bear ye one another's burdens, and ſo fulfil the law of Chriſt.

Gal. vi. 2.

CHARITY does not extend ſo far as to oblige us not to ſee the defects of others; not to do that, we muſt be blind: but it requires that we ſhould avoid being unneceſſarily obſervant of them, and that we who are ſo quick ſighted to their failings, ſhould never be blind to their merits. Charity is not blind to what is contemptible, but bears with it, in order to co-operate with the ſecret deſigns of God; it does not indulge a diſdainful averſion, or impatience. No corruption aſtoniſhes it, no weakneſs diſcourages it, for it relies on God alone, and perceives that all which is not of him, is nothing but vanity and ſin.

Father,

Father, I have finiſhed the work which thou gaveſt me to do. Jo. xvii. 4.

WE ought each of us to endeavour after ſuch a ſtate as to be enabled to ſay as much, at that day when we ſhall be called to give an account of our works. I ought to regard that which offers itſelf to me, according to the order of God's providence, as a work he gives me to do, and apply myſelf to the accompliſhment of it in a manner worthy of him, that is to ſay, with diligence and quietneſs. I will not neglect any thing, nor will I be paſſionately eager in my proceeding; for it is dangerous to do the work of God negligently, or through ſelf-love and a falſe zeal to make it our own; in that caſe God's work would be done by our own ſpirit, and therefore ill done. We ſhould be vexed, offended, and ſolicitous for its ſucceſs. The glory of God is the pretence. O God, give me grace to be faithful and diligent in the action, and indifferent as to the event. The one thing needful for me is to will thy will, and to remember thee in all my employments. Thy part is to give to my weak efforts ſuch fruits as ſhall pleaſe thee, or not any, if ſo be thy will.

Be ye alſo ready, for in ſuch an hour as you think not, the Son of man cometh.

Matth. xxiv. 44.

THESE words are addreſſed perſonally to us, in whatever age or ſtation we be. Nevertheleſs, even good men form projects, which ſuppoſe a long life, and that at a time when it is juſt drawing to a concluſion. If in the laſt ſtage of an incurable diſorder, they entertain hopes of a recovery, what do they not hope for in full health? But whence comes this obſtinate hope of life? It is becauſe they paſſionately love it. And whence comes it that they would ſo long put off the ſtroke of death? It is becauſe they love not the kingdom of God, nor the greatneſs of the world to come. The true means of being always ready for the laſt moment, is to employ the others well, and be in conſtant expectation of it.

They that ſow in tears, ſhall reap in joy.

Pſalm cxxvi. 6.

WE muſt ſow that we may reap; this life is the ſeaſon for ſowing; in the other, we ſhall enjoy the fruits of our labour. The man of this world, ſlothful, and impatient, would reap

before

before he has ſown. We wiſh to have God beſtow comforts upon us, and ſmoothe the way that leads us to him. We are willing to ſerve him, provided it coſts us but little. To hope for much, and ſuffer little, is the aim of ſelf-love.

How blind are we? Shall we never perceive that *the kingdom of heaven ſuffereth violence*,* and that none but courageous ſouls, who vanquiſh themſelves, are worthy to obtain it? Let us then be contented to weep here below, ſince it is declared, *Bleſſed are they that mourn*,† and *Woe to you that laugh now*.‡ The woe is to thoſe who have their conſolation in this world! The time will come, when their vain joys ſhall be confounded; the world ſhall lament, and *God ſhall wipe away all tears from our eyes*.‖

On our Daily Bread.

Give us this day our daily bread. Luke xi. 3.

O MY God, what is this bread? It is not only what thou affordeſt us for the ſupport of this life, but that food of truth, which thou giveſt daily to the ſoul. It is a bread which

*Matt. xi. 12. † Matt. v. 4. ‡ Luke vi. 25.

‖ Rev. vii. 17.

nouriſhes us to life everlaſting: which increaſes and ſtrengthens the ſoul in the trials of faith. Thou reneweſt it daily. Thou giveſt what is ſufficient to the ſoul, for its advancement in the life of faith, and the renunciation of ſelf.

All that is bitter in outward things, or in the interiour of my ſoul, and all that befalls me in the courſe of the day, is my daily bread, provided I refuſe not to accept it from thy hand!

On the Peace of the Soul.

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you.

John xiv. 27.

ALL men ſeek for peace; but they do not ſeek it where it is to be found. The world promiſes peace, but cannot give it. It offers tranſitory pleaſures, but they are not worth the pains they coſt. Jeſus Chriſt alone can give peace to man; he cures our paſſions, and regulates our deſires. He comforts us with the hopes of everlaſting bleſſings: he makes us taſte that inward joy, even in pain; and as the ſpring that produces it is inexhauſtible, and the bottom of the ſoul where it reſides, is inacceſſible to all the malice of men, it becomes a treaſure

ſure to the righteous which no one can take from them.

Deſire nothing but God, ſeek him alone, and you ſhall find peace. What is it that is the cauſe of your uneaſineſs? Is it poverty, contempt, bad ſucceſs in your undertakings, inward and outward croſſes? Regard all theſe things as coming from the hand of God, and in reality bleſſings in diſguiſe, which he diſtributes to his friends, and of which he vouchſafes to make you partakers. This will change the face of the world with regard to you, and nothing ſhall be able to deprive you of your peace.

Whoſoever drinketh of this water ſhall thirſt again.
John iv. 13.

THE more we drink of the corrupted waters of this world, the more we are athirſt; the more we indulge ourſelves in what is bad, the more do uneaſy deſires ſpring up in our hearts. The poſſeſſion of riches only increaſes our thirſt for them. Avarice and ambition are more diſcontented about what they have not, than they are ſatisfied with what they really poſſeſs: the enjoyment of pleaſures enervate the ſoul, they corrupt it, and render it inſatiable. The more we are diverted, the more we would be

ſo: it is eaſier to preſerve our hearts in a ſtate of fervour and penitence, than to bring them back or reſtrain them, when they have once got a bias towards pleaſure and diverſion. Let us then be watchful over ourſelves; let us avoid drinking a water that will increaſe our thirſt. Let us diligently guard our hearts, leſt the world ſhould ſeduce them with its vain conſolations, and leave them in the end nothing but the ſorrow of being deceived.

Bleſſed are they that mourn, for they ſhall be comforted.
Matt. v. 5.

WHAT a new kind of tears are thoſe which make ſuch as ſhed them happy?* Their happineſs conſiſts in mourning at the corruption of the world that ſurrounds us, the ſnares that encompaſs us, and the inexhauſtible fund of evil in the bottom of our hearts. It is a great gift from God, to fear the loſs of his love, and to dread, leſt we ſhould ſtray out of the ſtrait and narrow path.

This is a ſubject of tears. It is difficult to rejoice while we are in danger of loſing all that is moſt precious to us, of loſing our very ſelves. When we alſo behold nothing but vanity, error, ſcandal to religion, forgetfulneſs and contempt of

* Auguſtine.

of that God we love, it is impoſſible not to be afflicted. Let us then weep at the ſight of ſo many mournful ſubjects. God will not be diſpleaſed at our ſorrow; it is he who inſpires us with it; it is his love that fills our eyes with tears, and he himſelf will come and wipe them away.

O bleſſed tears, the work of grace, which make us diſreliſh all tranſitory things, and cauſe the deſire of eternal bleſſings to grow up in us!

How great is the loving kindneſs of the Lord our God, and his compaſſion unto ſuch as turn unto him in holineſs! Eccleſ. xvii. 29.

IN the preſence of God, meditate on the effects of this infinite mercy; on thoſe inſtances of it which thou haſt already experienced; on the lights received from Jeſus Chriſt; on the good thoughts he has inſpired thee with; on the ſins he has forgiven thee; the ſnares of the world from which he has preſerved thee; and the extraordinary ſuccours he has afforded thee. Strive to affect thy heart, by reflecting on all theſe precious tokens of his goodneſs. Add to them the remembrance of ſuch croſſes as he has laden thee with, in order to ſanctify thee; for they are alſo riches, which he has drawn

from

from the depth of his treaſures, and ought to be regarded as ſignal teſtimonies of his love.

Let the remembrance of the paſt inſpire thee with confidence as to the future; be not diffident of God, but only of thyſelf; he is, as the apoſtle ſays, the Father of mercies, and God of all comfort.

On the Eaſineſs of the Yoke of Chriſt.

Chriſt ſaith, "My yoke is eaſy, and my burden is light." Matt. xi. 30.

LET not the name of yoke terrify us. Jeſus Chriſt will cauſe us to love this yoke; he ſweetens it by the inward charms of truth and righteouſneſs; he ſheds his chaſte delights over virtue, and cauſes us to loathe falſe pleaſures; he bears man up againſt himſelf, draws him out of his corruption, and renders him ſtrong in ſpite of his weakneſs. O man of little faith, what doſt thou fear? let God act for thee; give up thyſelf to him. Thou wilt ſuffer, it is true; but it will be peaceably, and with love. Thou muſt fight, but ſhalt gain the victory; and God himſelf having fought on thy ſide, will crown thee with his own hand. Thou ſhalt weep, but thy tears will be ſweet, and God ſhall come with tenderneſs to wipe them away. Thou wilt no longer be ſuffered to yield thyſelf to thy tyrannick

tyrannick paſſions; but by ſacrificing thy liberty, ſhalt gain a freedom unknown to the world, and more precious than all the power that kings poſſeſs.

What a blindneſs is it to fear the being too far engaged with God! The more we love him, the more we ſhall love the work he aſſigns us. It is this love that comforts us in all our troubles, that ſoftens our croſſes, that ſhews us a gracious mercy in the midſt of all the ills we ſuffer, and diſcovers to us, even in death itſelf, everlaſting glory and happineſs. How can we dread the being too much engaged to him? Is it an unhappineſs to be delivered from the heavy yoke of the world, and to bear the light burden of Jeſus Chriſt? Shall we fear being too much freed from ourſelves, from our pride, the violence of our paſſions, and the tyranny of a deceitful world?

On the right Employment of our Time.

While we have opportunity, let us do good. The night cometh when no man can work.

Gal. vi. 10. John ix. 4.

TIME is precious, but its value is unknown to us. We ſhall attain this knowledge when we can no longer profit by it; our friends require

quire it of us, as if it was nothing; and we give it to them in the ſame manner. It is often a burden to us; we know not what to do with it. The day will come, when a quarter of an hour will appear of more value, and more deſirable, than all the riches of the univerſe. God, who is liberal and generous in all his other gifts, teaches us, by the wiſe œconomy of his Providence, how circumſpect we ought to be in the right management of our time, for he never gives us two moments together, he gives us only the ſecond, as he takes away the firſt, and keeps the third in his hands, leaving us in an abſolute uncertainty whether it ſhall ever be ours or not. Time is given us, that we may take care of eternity, and eternity will not be too long, to regret the loſs of our time, if we have miſ-ſpent it.

Our whole life, as well as our whole heart, is God's, nor are they both too much for him. He has given them to us only that we may love and ſerve him. Let us not rob him of either, It is true we cannot every moment perform great actions; but we may do ſuch as are agreeable to our ſtate. When we are not called to any outward employment, to be ſilent, to ſuffer, or to pray, is to offer much to God. A diſappointment, a contradiction, a complaint, a vexation, or unjuſt accuſation received and ſuffered in the ſight of God, is as valuable as time ſpent in prayer. We do not throw away our time, when in the loſs of it, we practiſe meekneſs

meekneſs and patience; but we muſt remember, that this loſs muſt not be procured by our own neglect.

Let us not waſte our days in amuſements, unprofitable correſpondencies, effuſions of the heart, which flatter ſelf-love, nor in converſations which diſſipate our ſpirits, and tend to no good purpoſe; and thus we ſhall find time enough for God; and no time is well employed but what is employed for him.

On the Preſence of God.

Walk before me, and be thou perfect. Gen. xvii. 1.

THUS didſt thou ſay, Lord, to faithful Abraham; and whoſoever walketh in thy preſence, is in the road to perfection. We do not ſtray from that holy way, but by loſing ſight of thee. Alas, where ſhall I go, when I ſee thee not, thou who art my light, and the only end to which my ſteps ſhould be directed? To look up to thee in all my ways, is the ſure means never to go aſtray. Bleſſed is that faith which ſhines in the midſt of the darkneſs that ſurrounds us. O God, it is thee alone I ſeek and conſider in all thoſe outward objects which my eyes ſeem to regard;

regard; the order of thy Providence is what attracts my attention.

Thus I endeavour, O thou sole object of my heart, to re-unite my whole attention in thee, even when, according to thy Divine will, I am obliged to divide my cares. Ah! what can I see in men, if thou ceasest to be my director, or if I cease to see thee in them?

I will lift up mine eyes to the hills from whence cometh my help. Psalm cxxi. 1.

IT would be in vain for me to have my eyes fixed solely on my feet, to deliver me from the innumerable snares that surround me. The danger is from below, but deliverance can come only from above. Thither my eyes are lifted up to behold thee, in every thing here; both inward and outward, there is a snare to me. It is towards thee, therefore, O Lord, my eyes and heart are lifted up. I would see only thee; I would hope only in thee.

EXTRACTS

FROM THE

ARCHBISHOP OF CAMBRAY'S

LETTERS.

LETTER I.

That the Love of God ought to be our Principle, our End, and our Rule, in all Things.

THE true manner of loving our neighbours, is to love them in and for God. This love requires from us nothing but innocent and regular manners. Nothing need be retrenched but what is evil, and ought to be retrenched, if we had no other principle but right reaſon to direct us.

The love of God does not require from every Chriſtian the auſterities of the ancient hermits, nor that we ſhould imitate their ſolitary

tary lives. It does not usually require a renunciation of all good, lawfully acquired, or that we should part with all the advantages of our condition in life. It only requires that we should be just, sober, and moderate in a suitable use of all these things. It only requires that we should not make them our God, and our happiness; this love does not increase our crosses, it finds them already thickly sown in every human state. Our crosses proceed from the infirmity of our bodies, and the passions of our souls: they proceed from our own imperfections, and the imperfections of those with whom we are obliged to live. It is not the love of God that causes our sufferings; on the contrary, it is that which softens them, by the consolation with which it seasons them. It even lessens our griefs, in proportion as it moderates the heat of our passions and our sensibility, which are the source of our real evils. If the love of God was perfect in us, so as to detach us from all that we are afraid to lose, it would put a period to all our sorrows, and render us happy in the enjoyment of a most blessed peace.

This love does not disturb or unsettle any thing in the order that God has established. It leaves the great in their greatness, and makes them little under the hand of him who made them great. It leaves the little in the lowness, and makes them content to be nothing but as he pleases. This content in the lowest

loweſt ſtation, has nothing mean in it, but is true greatneſs.

This love regulates and animates all thoſe affections which we owe to God's creatures. We never love our neighbour ſo much, as when we love him for God, and with his love. When we love men without God, we love them only for ourſelves; we ſeek in them our own intereſt, either in a groſs, or more delicate and diſguiſed manner. To love another for ourſelves, is to love him very imperfectly; it is rather ſelf-love than true friendſhip.

LETTER II.

To the Duke of Burgundy, Father of Louis XV.

1708.

I THANK God, from the bottom of my heart, that I ſee with what ſimplicity and kindneſs you condeſcend to lay open to me all that paſſes in your breaſt. The greater the deſigns of God are towards you, the more jealous he is of your natural talents. It is his will that you ſhould feel trouble, dejection, and oppreſſion of heart, which overwhelms you, and weakneſſes that render you diſſatisfied with yourſelf; it would diſpleaſe God if you ſhould rejoice in your own ſtrength, and reflect with complacency on your ſuperiority over other men.

men. Behave not as a great prince, but like a little ſhepherd who went with five ſtones againſt the giant Goliah. If you are not prejudiced, either for or againſt any one, and liſten coolly to thoſe you ought to liſten to, or conſult with, and if, without any reſpect to your own natural inclinations or prejudices, you follow what God preſent and humbly invoked, ſhall inſpire you with, you will find yourſelf free, relieved, ſimple, and well reſolved: and you will commit no miſtakes, but ſo far as you fail to act with a continual dependance on the ſpirit of grace.

I bleſs God for it, that you are not inſenſible of your defects, and that he has taught you to your coſt, and by ſuch hard leſſons, to miſtruſt and deſpair of yourſelf. But ſeek in God all the reſources which you find wanting in yourſelf. *I can do all things*, ſays St. Paul, *through him who ſtrengtheneth me.** Live by faith, and not by your own wiſdom, or your own courage. Do not be frightened at what you want: ſtrive to gain it patiently by little and little, and in the conteſt depend only on God. He ſhews you how much wars are to be dreaded, how uſeleſs the mightieſt armies are, and how eaſily the greateſt nations are ſhaken. He ſhews you how ſeverely the greateſt princes are cenſured by the publick, while flatterers ceaſe not to offer incenſe at their ſhrines.

* Phil. iv. 13.

When

When we are appointed to rule over men, we muſt love them for the love of God, and ſacrifice ourſelves for their happineſs, though we know they ſpeak evil of us, even while we rule them with kindneſs and moderation.

As to your piety, if you would do honour to it, you cannot be too attentive to render it ſweet, ſimple, and eaſy. Proceed directly to the extirpation of your principal defects, through your love of God, and a renunciation of ſelf-love.

LETTER III.

To the ſame.

I SHOULD be inconſolable on account of the misfortunes you experience, but in expectation of the fruit God will enable you to draw from theſe trials. God often beſtows temporal proſperities on the wicked, to ſhew how lightly he eſteems what the world is ſo dazzled with; but for croſſes he reſerves them for his own, who he would humble under his Almighty hand, and make them the objects of his delight.—Every man wants much, be he otherwiſe ever ſo great, who has never known adverſity.—Great princes, above all other men, require leſſons of adverſity; it is generally what they

moſt

moſt ſtand in need of. They have occaſion for oppoſition, to teach them moderation.

Without oppoſition, princes might forget that they are human. They ſhould be ſenſible, that every thing is ſubject to viciſſitude; that even their greatneſs is fickle; and that all men, who are now ſo officious in their ſervices, would forſake them if they ſhould loſe that greatneſs.

An Extract from the Prince's Anſwers to Letters.

I SHALL endeavour to follow the advice you give me; and I beg you will pray to God to give me his grace ſo to do: alſo that he may grant me to love him above all things, and that I may love myſelf, my friends, and enemies, in him, and for him. I hear many things that are ſaid of me, and ſhall hear more. I condemn myſelf for things in which I am faulty, and the reſt I deſpiſe, ſincerely pardoning thoſe that would do me wrong, and praying for them. I am determined to give myſelf up to God. Pray to him that he would finiſh in me what he has begun, and deſtroy in me what comes from ſin and ſelf.

LETTER

LETTER IV.

On the Happineſs of thoſe who leave all in conſequence of their being converted to God.

WHAT I have been told of the ſituation of your heart ſo affects me, that I muſt lay aſide all ceremony with you. I am under a neceſſity of telling you, that we muſt yield to God, when he invites us to let him reign in our hearts.—Did we deliberate ſo much, when the world invited us to yield ourſelves to be ſeduced by amuſements and our paſſions? Did we then ſo heſitate? Have we as much reſiſted the evil, as we have the good? Did we ever ſeriouſly reflect when we ſtrayed from the path of virtue, when we corrupted ourſelves, when we acted contrary to the inward dictates of our hearts and reaſon, in queſt of vanity, or ſenſual pleaſure?

Do we conſider, that it is an all-powerful hand that has made us? Do we make it our buſineſs to acknowledge that we owe all to him from whom we hold all, and that he has made us for himſelf alone? Inſtead of this, we are apt to waver, we deliberate, we raiſe doubts with regard to the cleareſt matters; we fear being too credulous; we are apprehenſive of giving too much to him for whom all is not more than ſufficient; we dare not let the world ſee that we are deſirous of ſerving God: in a word, we are as timorous, irreſolute, and uneaſy

with regard to virtue, as we have been presumptuous and inconsiderate in our irregular courses.

I desire but one thing of you, which is, to follow simply the bias that is in the bottom of your heart towards that which is good, as you have formerly followed the dictates of your passions towards that which is evil. As often as you examine the fundamentals of religion, you will readily acknowledge that there can be nothing solid objected to them, and that they who oppose them, only do so that they may not subject themselves to the restraints of virtue: thus they refuse to follow God, only to please themselves. I would ask, What do we risk by serving God? We shall have nearly the same duties to perform, and the same pains patiently to suffer; but then we shall add to them the consolation of loving what is supremely amiable; of labouring and suffering to please our true and perfect friend, who keeps account of our smallest performances, and rewards them an hundred fold in this life by that peace which he sheds in our hearts. Lastly, we shall add to them the blessed hope of everlasting life.

Ask your virtuous friends, of whose sincerity you have no doubt; ask them what it has cost them to serve God, whether they repent their being engaged in his service. They were once in the world like yourself; ask them whether they regret their having forsaken it, or if the intoxication of Babylon is sweeter than the

peace

peace of Sion? They will say, whatever crosses we suffer in the Christian life, we never lose that peace of mind, in which we are content with all we suffer, and never desire those joys we are deprived of.

From LETTER V.

Containing divers admonitions and precautions to a person, who, whilst living in the world, is desirous of being converted unto God.

THE principal point is, that in good earnest you devote yourself to God, which is to be effected by a due distrust of yourself, suitable to the many experiences you have had of your own weakness; and to renounce, without delay, all such company as endangers your relapse.—If you are desirous of loving God, why will you pass your life with those who love him not, and make a jest of his love? Why are you not pleased with the company of those that love God, a connexion with whom would be a means of strengthening and establishing your love?—I do not desire you to break precipitately and absolutely with all your friends, and those persons whom a proper regard to decency obliges you to have some intercourse with; still less do

I desire that you should abandon what are called duties. But I speak of such continued connexions as have a natural tendency to enervate the mind, and which insensibly draw us away in opposition to our best resolutions. I speak of avoiding frequent conversations with vain persons, whose ambition is to please, and all other company that awakens your taste for pleasure, and occasions a dissipation that is exceedingly dangerous. All this would be very hurtful to men the most confirmed in virtue, and consequently is still more pernicious to one who has only taken the first step towards it.

The holy scripture says, *He that loveth danger, shall perish therein.* It is necessary, however dear it may cost us, to leave all such things as border upon vice. We are obliged, according to the command of Jesus Christ, *to cut off our hand*, and *pluck out our eye*, if they *offend us*;* that is to say, if they become snares to us, and endanger our fall.

One principal thing you have to do, is, to withdraw from all those amusements, that are still more dangerous for you, than for others; and to confine yourself to the society of a few select persons, who think as you would wish to do all your life.

* Matth. v. 29, 30.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

Admonitions to a perſon wavering with regard to his Converſion to God.

SUFFER me to ſhow you how blamable you would be, in the ſight of God, ſhould you reſiſt the knowledge of the Truth, and thoſe lively ſentiments with which God has inſpired you. This would be to reſiſt the Holy Spirit itſelf. The journey you have been at the pains to take, would condemn you. You cannot doubt of the baſeneſs of the world, its incapacity to make you happy, or of the illuſion that there is in all its flattering promiſes. You feel the reality of the exiſtence of God, by the wiſdom which ſhines forth in all his works, and the virtues with which he inſpires thoſe men who are filled with his love. What can you object againſt things that are ſo convincing, except your love of liberty, or unaptneſs to be taught? You are afraid to bear the yoke; and this is the true leaven of a certain incredulity which produces your objections. You would perſuade yourſelf, that your belief is not yet ſtrong enough, and that in this ſtate of doubt you cannot take any ſtep towards religion without raſhneſs, and being in danger of an immediate relapſe: but in theſe doubts you impoſe upon yourſelf, in order to diſpenſe with

the deſtruction of ſelf, and the ſacrifice of a liberty of which ſelf-love is jealous. You can object nothing to the truths of religion, but the fear of being too much reſtrained, and leading a malancholy uncomfortable life; nothing but the fear of being carried further than you deſire in the road to perfection. It is by ſetting a high value on religion; feeling its juſt authority; and ſeeing the ſacrifice it inſpires, that you are afraid of it, and dare not give yourſelf up to it.

But permit me to tell you, that you do not yet know how ſweet and amiable it is. You ſee what it takes away, but you ſee not what it gives. God will conduct you with diſcretion: if he reſtrains your corrupt paſſions, he will by the virtue of his love give you ſuch a taſte for truth and virtue, as will be ſuperior to all your irregular inclinations.

Be juſt to yourſelf, and you will ſoon be juſt with regard to God. Humble yourſelf, be diffident of yourſelf, be little in your own eyes, be ſenſible of the darkneſs of your underſtanding, and the frailty of your heart. Inſtead of pretending to judge of God, ſuffer yourſelf to be judged by him, and acknowledge that you ſtand in need of his aſſiſtance, in order to your reformation. Nothing is great but this inward littleneſs of the ſoul. Nothing is reaſonable, but this juſt diſavowal of our own erring reaſon.

O how enlightened is the humble ſoul! What truths it ſees, when it is thoroughly convinced

of

of its own darkneſs, and is leſt without any further reſource for its preſumption!

LETTER VII.

The Danger of a Perſon engaged in the World.

I HEARTILY pity M——s, as I perceive his preſent conflict is very great. He has begun to turn to God, but his virtue is yet weak. He is under a neceſſity of wreſtling with all his natural propenſities, his inclinations, thoſe habits to which he is moſt attached, and likewiſe his ſtrongeſt paſſions. He is accuſtomed to continual diſſipation, and has not leſs to reſiſt from without than within. He is ſurrounded with temptations, and bad examples: every thing he ſees, leads him to evil: he is at a diſtance from all good examples, or good advice. An infant piety, ſo circumſtanced, is, I grant, expoſed to an uncommon trial. Yet I cannot think it agreeable to the deſign of God, that he ſhould ſuddenly abandon his employment without paying any regard to form or decency. If he is faithful to attend to thoſe duties which are likely to help him, to watch over his own conduct, to be diffident of himſelf, and avoid diſſipation, I hope God will take care of him,

and not ſuffer him to be tempted above what he is able. That conduct which God inſpires, and which is the reſult of his love, is generally directed by a gentle and imperceptible Providence; which ſo leads to the things required, that they appear to come of themſelves. There muſt be nothing forced or irregular. It is better to wait a little, to open the door with the key, than, through impatience, to break the lock.—If this retreat proceeds from God, his hand will open the way for it: he muſt rely only upon God, and fear nothing ſo much as his own frailty. I wiſh then that he may be very wary with regard to the temptations incident to his employment, but not to throw it up in a precipitate manner. Let him fear, leſt he deceive himſelf: perhaps he thinks leſs of ſecuring his ſalvation, than of leading a more eaſy, ſweet, and agreeable life; and flies leſs from ſin than from the diſguſts, the troubles, the fatigues, and reſtraints of his preſent ſituation. This is a natural deception; and it is very common for ſelf-love to perſuade us, that we act from a conſcientious principle, when it is that which in fact has the greateſt aſcendency in our determination.

O how does God compaſſionate and conſole the contrite heart, which has reſource to him with confidence! He has compaſſion on all; he is inexhauſtible in goodneſs, patience, and love. I pray that he may direct our friend.

LETTER

LETTER VIII.

How to diſtinguiſh the Impulſes of Grace from thoſe of Nature.

I HAVE conſidered your difficulty with regard to diſtinguiſhing between the impulſes of grace, and thoſe of diſguiſed nature. The beſt evidence that we are actuated by grace, is, firſt, when the outward action is pure, and conformable to the perfection of evangelical counſels: ſecondly, when we act with ſimplicity and calmneſs, without any eager deſire with regard to the action, but are content to abſtain from it, if it appears that we ought to do ſo: thirdly, that after having done it, we ſeek not by uneaſy reflections to juſtify the action, but readily ſubmit to have it found fault with; and in the end do not appropriate to ourſelves the action, but leave it to the judgment of God: fourthly, when, after the action, the ſoul remains in its ſimplicity, peace, rectitude, lowlineſs, and diſappropriation.

There is one thing which appears to me worth obſerving, which is, that it is often more eaſy to perceive what is the reſult of nature than of grace. Let us peaceably drop natural impulſes, as well thoſe of idleneſs as thoſe of impetuoſity; thoſe that are the conſequence of a refined underſtanding, as thoſe that are excited by the groſs deſires of the fleſh; and

in this peace let us act, without exceeding the bounds of Christian precepts and counsels, as our hearts dictate to us in the presence of God, in order to our dying to ourselves, and pleasing our well-beloved.

But we must be careful lest we fall into scruples, and dangerous trouble, by desiring so to order all things, that we may assure ourselves we perform them through grace; for this would be to quench grace, by requiring an assurance that we follow it; under a pretence of security, it would be entering into all the views of self-love, which we pretend to shun: it would be passing our life in reasoning on the operations of grace, without daring to trust ourselves to them; it would be following nature to discover grace, and to constrain the state of faith.—And now, to speak more immediately and directly to your own case, remember that the bias of your nature, and the snare of illusion, which you are to fear, is not gross debaucheries, but the excesses of reason, and the intemperance of a wisdom diving too deep. Reason but little, and do much; instead of which you are tempted to reason much, and by that means to do little. Even wisdom ought to be sober, and temperate. This sobriety, and the simplicity of the understanding, are the same thing. Reasoning produces nothing but irresolution, and is a hindrance to the work of God. Walk in the light, while it shines forth, instead of examining into the source and cause of it.—

The

The exercise of true love dispels all doubts, and loaths speculative reasoning.

LETTER IX.

A Letter of Consolation.

IT is but a poor consolation to tell you that I have a deep sense of your calamity. It is, nevertheless, all that human weakness can do; and to do any thing more, we must have recourse to God. It is to him then, that I address myself; to that comforter of the afflicted, and protector of the weak. I beg of him not to deliver you from your trouble, but that he may make it profitable to you, that he would give you strength to bear it. The sovereign remedy against the great evils of our nature, is sharp afflictions; it is in the midst of sorrows that we accomplish the great mystery of Christianity, that is to say, the inward crucifixion of the old man. It is here the virtue of grace unfolds itself, and operates most intimately, which is to teach us not to have a dependance on ourselves. We must come out of ourselves, to be able to resign ourselves to God. Thus our heart, wounded in the most tender part, troubled in its sweetest, most just, and innocent attachments,

perceives it can no longer keep poſſeſſion of itſelf, and is drawn from itſelf, that it may advance towards God.

This is the great remedy againſt the evils ſin has oppreſſed us with; the remedy is ſevere, but the evil alſo is very deep. God ſtrikes two perſons nearly united, which proves an unſpeakable good to each: he takes one to heaven, and renders this afflictive ſtroke ſalutary to the other, who remains on earth. This is what God has done for you. May he, by his holy Spirit, awaken your faith, ſo that you may be penetrated with theſe truths! This ſhall be my prayer; and as I have great confidence in the prayers of people in affliction, I beg you will pray for me in the midſt of your ſorrows. Your charity will tell you what I want, and cauſe you to aſk it for me with earneſtneſs.

LETTER X.

Hearts, united in God, are together, however ſeparated by Space.

AT the bottom of my heart I am always united to you and your dear family. Though we cannot ſee each other, yet are we very near; whereas people who meet often in the ſame room, are in reality very diſtant the one from

from the other. God unites all, and, with regard to hearts united in him, annihilates the greateſt diſtances.

I am not inſenſible of the loſs I ſuſtain in being deprived of the ſight of you, but I muſt bear it patiently as long as God pleaſes, and even till death, if it be his will. Let your neceſſary duties engage your attention. As for the reſt, be retired and recollected, careful to regulate well your affairs. May our Lord bleſs your houſehold, and may it ever be his own.

LETTER XI.

The Danger of an active and diſſipated Spirit.

I AM pleaſed with the excellent letter you have wrote to me: I ſee in it your heart! I hope God will preſerve you from the contagion of the age. The chief thing for you to guard againſt is, an eaſy temper, and natural activity. You have a greater tendency to diſſipation than moſt people, and when diſſipated you become weak. As you can only have your ſtrength from God, you muſt not wonder that you are left deſtitute of his help, when you leave him. It is enough that he ſupports us when we do not fly from him; but when we eſtrange our-

ſelves

ſelves from him, and fear not to fall, we cannot hope for his aſſiſtance, which is met with in recollection and prayer. You have an openneſs of manner which pleaſes and prepoſſeſſes the world in your favour: there is nothing ſo dangerous as the power of pleaſing: ſelf-love is charmed with it, and this poiſons the heart.—At firſt people amuſe and flatter themſelves; then they are diſſipated; and find all their good reſolutions diminiſh; then they become intoxicated with themſelves and the world; that is to ſay, with pleaſure and vanity: afterwards finding themſelves at a diſtance from God, they have no longer courage to return, and dare not think of making the neceſſary ſacrifices.

You have no remedy but to guard againſt diſſipation. I intreat you to devote one quarter of an hour every morning, and the ſame towards evening, to reading and meditation, with freedom, ſimplicity, and affection. From time to time endeavour to renew the preſence of God in your ſoul, and your intention to act for him: be humbled at the ſenſe of your faults; ſtrive to correct them; without flattering be patient with yourſelf, as you would be with another. I ſhall, with all my heart, pray for you.

LETTER

LETTER XII.

We muſt prefer Humility, Charity, and the Practice of what we already know, to Reputation, and the deſire of knowing more.

I AM very well ſatisfied with your diſpoſitions, and you do well to acquaint me, with ſo much ſimplicity, of what paſſes within you. There is nothing to be wondered at, in your having a kind of ambition to advance yourſelf in ſpirituality, and to be in the confidence of eminent people who are ſervants of God. Self-love naturally ſeeks ſuch kind of diſtinctions to flatter it. But remember, you muſt not be pleaſed with a ſort of ambition that makes a ſhining progreſs in virtue, or deſires the confidence of diſtinguiſhed perſons: no, you muſt die to the flattering appetites of ſelf-love; you muſt humble yourſelf, love obſcurity and contempt, and aim at God alone.

It is not by hearing or reading a book on perfection, that we become perfect. The great point is, not to hear ourſelves, but to liſten to God in ſilence, to renounce all vanity, and to apply ourſelves to real virtues. Speak little, and do much, without deſiring to be noticed. God will teach you more than all the moſt experienced people, or all the moſt ſpiritual books. Ah! why do you deſire ſo much knowledge? What do you want to learn, if it

be

be not to be poor in ſpirit, and to find all your knowledge in Chriſt crucified? *Knowledge puffeth up, but charity alone edifieth.* Alas, is ſo much knowledge neceſſary to know how to love God, and to renounce ourſelves for the love of him? You know a great deal more than you practiſe; you have much leſs occaſion for new lights, than to follow thoſe you have already received. O how we deceive ourſelves when we think we advance by reaſoning with inquiſitiveneſs! Be humble and never expect from men the gifts of God.

LETTER XIII.

To avoid looking into Futurity, and to live in Faith and Reſignation to the will of God.

REGARD not diſtant events: this uneaſineſs about the future is in oppoſition to the grace received. When God aſſiſts you, regard him alone in the aſſiſtance he gives you, and receive it each day, as the Iſraelites did the manna, without providing for the next. Two things are neceſſary to the life of pure faith. The firſt is, that we behold God alone, under all the imperfect coverings that conceal him; the

the ſecond is, conſtantly to have our ſouls kept in a ſtate of dependance.

This perpetual dependance, this obſcurity, and this peace of the ſoul in the uncertainty of what may happen to it, is a true martyrdom without oſtentation. The death is ſo ſlow and inward, that it is almoſt as often hid from the ſoul that ſuffers it, as from thoſe who are ignorant of its ſtate. When God takes from you his gifts, he knows how to ſupply their place, either by other inſtruments, or by himſelf. Even ſtones in his hand can become children of Abraham. Eat then in peace your daily bread. *Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.* To-morrow will provide for the things of itſelf. He who feeds us to-day, the ſame will feed us to-morrow.

LETTER XIV.

THE ſtate of the apoſtles between the aſcenſion of the Son of God, and the coming of the Holy Ghoſt, was a ſtate of prayer and retirement; in which they waited for power from on high. The preparation for your receiving the Holy Spirit, is not to liſten to your own ſpirit. The only obſtacle I fear for you is the want of quiet; give up all doubts and ſcruples, let them buzz in your imagination like

like bees in a hive; if you ſtir them up, you will provoke them, and they will do you much harm; if you do not meddle with them, you will only hear their noiſe, and be afraid of them.

Accuſtom yourſelf to peace of heart, in oppoſition to your reſtleſs imagination.

LETTER XV.

We are not to be diſturbed at the Irregularities of Men, but ſubmit every Thing to God, in the Accompliſhment of our Duties.

A WARM imagination, a vivacity of ſentiments, or a multiplicity of words, do ſcarcely any thing; the effectual method is to act before God in a thorough diſengagement, doing all we can by his light, and being content with the ſucceſs he is pleaſed to give. One word ſpoken ſimply in this peace, operates more than all our ardent and eager cautions. As it is the Spirit of God that then ſpeaks it loſes nothing of its ſtrength and authority; it enlightens, perſuades, affects, and edifies. Little is ſpoken, yet every thing is done. On the contrary, when we are led by the vivacity of our nature, we make many ſubtle and ſuperfluous

fluous reflections, we are afraid we never ſpeak or do enough, we exhauſt our ſpirits, are diſſipated, and yet nothing is done.

Let the water flow; let men be men, that is to ſay, weak, vain, inconſtant, unjuſt and aſſuming. Do not diſturb yourſelf. Inure yourſelf to what is unreaſonable and unjuſt. Reſt in peace in the boſom of God, who ſees better than you all theſe evils, and who permits them. Be contented to do with coolneſs the little that depends upon you: let every thing elſe be, with regard to you, as if it was not. I am well pleaſed to find, that you have leiſure hours. Be neither covetous nor prodigal of them.

LETTER XVI.

I SYMPATHIZE in all your troubles; but there is a neceſſity for our bearing the croſs with Jeſus Chriſt in this ſhort life. In a little time there will be an end of our ſuffering, when we ſhall reign with God the Comforter, who will wipe away our tears, and before whom our ſorrows and ſighings ſhall flee away for ever. While we remain in this momentary ſtate, whoſe trials are ſo light, let us ſuffer humbly and in peace. Self love magnifies them in our imagination. A croſs, borne in ſimplicity,

ſimplicity, without theſe returns of ſelf-love, is made light to us. When we ſuffer in this ſimplicity of love, we are notwithſtanding happy, for love is pleaſed to ſuffer for the ſake of its well-beloved: and the croſs that makes us conformable to him, carries its conſolation with it.

Bear the heavy burden of the aged, who is no longer able to bear it herſelf. Reaſon grows weak at that age; even virtue, unleſs it be well grounded, ſeems to ſlacken: humour and fretfulneſs have then the ſtrength which the underſtanding loſes.

LETTER XVII.

I AM not ſorry that age and infirmities make you now regard death, as near at hand, much more ſeriouſly than you formerly did when at a diſtance. A diſtant and confuſed view which we ſometimes have, and is frequently diverted, is but like a dream: but the ſame view when ſeen in ſolitude and the weakneſs of age, brings near us, and realizes the object.

We ſhould deſire our diſſolution (when it pleaſes the Almighty ſo to order). No doubt there is a joy in dying; but this joy does not depend

depend on us; many great ſaints have been deprived of it: let us be content with wanting that which is not given us to taſte. Let Nature refuſe the bitter cup; but let the inward man ſay with Jeſus Chriſt, *Nevertheleſs not as I will, but as thou wilt.* We are not maſter of our ſentiments, but we are of our conſent, aſſiſted by the grace of God.

We properly enough wait for death, when we endeavour to be detached from every thing; when we humble ourſelves for our ſmalleſt faults, with a deſire of correcting them; when we walk in the preſence of God; when we are tractable and patient in ſickneſs; when we give ourſelves up to the ſpirit of grace to act under its influence; laſtly, when we ſeek to die to ſelf on all occaſions, before the death of the body happens. Make a good uſe of your faults; aſſiſt your neighbour; diſregard the forgetfulneſs of man; the faithful friend, the ſpouſe of the heart, will never forget you.

LETTER XVIII.

IT appears to me that you want to be ſoftened with regard to the defects of other people. I grant you cannot avoid ſeeing them when they are before you, nor can you prevent reflecting

flecting on the principles that ſeem to govern ſome men. It is ſufficient that you are willing to bear with certain defects; that you paſs no judgment on thoſe that are doubtful, and that you do not indulge an uneaſineſs which would make you ſhun ſociety.

Perfection eaſily bears the imperfection of others. God leaves, in the beſt ſouls, certain weakneſſes entirely diſproportioned to their high ſtate, to ſhow them by what remains, how much miſery he has taken from them.

I aſk of you now more than ever not to ſpare my faults. When you think you ſee one, which perhaps I have not, it will not diſturb me if your admonition wounds me, the ſenſibility will ſhew me you have touched me to the quick; ſo you will do me much good by exerciſing me in abjection, and accuſtoming me to be found fault with. I have more need than others to be pulled down, as I am more elevated by my ſituation in life, and God requires from me a greater death to all things. I have occaſion for this ſimplicity; and I hope it will cement our union, inſtead of diſſolving it.

LETTER

LETTER XIX.

TRUE reſignation has no road of its own, or deſire of pleaſing itſelf; it goes on ſtrait, as God pleaſes. The ſtrait road is the renouncing ourſelves, that God may be all, and we nothing. I hope that he who gives fodder to the cattle, and feeds the young ravens, will take care of you. Happy is he, who, like Jeſus Chriſt, has not where to lay his head! When we have delivered ourſelves up to the inward poverty, ſhall we be afraid of the outward? Be faithful to God, and God will be ſo to his promiſes. Do honour to religion, that is ſo deſpiſed, and it will reward you with uſury.

Be afraid of your vivacity, your love of the world, and the ſecret ambition, which ſlides into the heart without your perceiving it. Be not drawn aſide by political converſation, or jovial mirth, which will diſſipate you, and indiſpoſe you for recollection and prayer. Contract your diſcourſe; be careful of your time; do every thing in order, and with regularity; and let good works take place of fine diſcourſes. Confine your attention to the preſent moment; eat your daily bread: *the morrow ſhall take thought for the things of itſelf: ſufficient to the day is the evil thereof.* It is tempting God to provide manna for ſeveral days. You cannot this day have to-morrow's grace.

LETTER

LETTER XX.

THE conſideration of the greatneſs and goodneſs of God, may often be the ſubject of your meditations. Aſk of God ſuch affections as will attach you to him. For it is not through the underſtanding, or reaſoning, that he draws ſouls to him, but through the diſpoſition of our heart, and the abaſement of our underſtanding.

Deteſt an effeminate, indolent, trifling life. As to your actions, when they are good in themſelves, repreſs all reflections on the motives that incited you to perform them; otherwiſe you will never have done with yourſelf. You will be diſturbed, diſcouraged, and by vain reaſoning on your actions, will loſe the time for acting. Let not your piety be melancholy, auſtere, and forced:—*Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.* If you once love him with all your heart, you will be almoſt always joyful, and your heart at liberty. But if you only turn to him, as the Jews did, through fear, you will not find him; but inſtead of him, will find nothing but ſorrow. Be friendly, obliging, and courteous; this will cauſe you to be beloved. Let it be ſeen, that it is not through affectation, or dullneſs, but through true religion, that you renounce youthful vanities and luſts. Moreover, let it be ſeen that you are diſcreet, and to be depended on in all your dealings; and be not ceremonious. Have but

few

few friends, and many acquaintances. Be careful to pleaſe thoſe who paſs for good men, and whoſe eſteem is reputable. Do not fear to aſk ſuch perſons queſtions, when you grow a little intimate with them.

LETTER XXI.

I HAVE often thought of the things you mentioned to me yeſterday, and I more and more hope that God will ſupport you. Though you do not find a great reliſh for the practice of piety, yet you muſt not fail to be as faithful in it as your health will permit. A ſick man recovering, ſtill loathes his food; but for all his want of appetite, he muſt eat, in order to nouriſh himſelf.

It would be uſeful to you ſometimes, to have a little Chriſtian converſation with ſuch perſons as you might open yourſelf to; but with regard to your choice of them, I leave you at liberty, according to your preſent liking. God draws you to himſelf by a ſenſible ſtroke, and I am glad of it, provided you remain firm in what is good; for a fidelity, ſupported without taſte, is much purer and more proof againſt all dangers, than the greateſt relentings which are but too imaginary.

LETTER XXII.

The Effects of Indolence and Amuſements; with Rules for our Conduct in order to overcome them.

WHAT you have moſt to fear is indolence and amuſement. Even people, who are well reſolved in the practice of virtue, and whoſe minds are filled with the horror of vice, theſe two defects are enough to throw into the moſt frightful diſorders. Indolence is a conſumption of the ſoul, which ſtupifies it, and takes from it all reliſh for what is good. You ſhould then have a vigorous faith, that will maſter this indolence without ever hearkening to it. As ſoon as we begin to liſten to it, all is loſt. It does as much miſchief, with reſpect to the world, as with reſpect to God. A man that is effeminate and diſſipated, cannot but be a mean man; and if he has great employments, they only diſhonour him. The love of his eaſe always overcomes him, in ſpite of his greateſt intereſts. He knows not how to improve his talents, or get a neceſſary knowledge in his profeſſion, or confine himſelf to the toilſome duties of it; neither can he ſo long ſubmit to reſtraint, as to accommodate himſelf to the liking of other people, nor apply himſelf with courage towards his own reformation.

This is the ſluggard, ſpoken of in the ſcripture, who would and who would not; who

would

would do what he ought while it is afar off, but whoſe arms want ſtrength as ſoon as he beholds this work at hand. What can we do with ſuch a man? He is good for nothing.—Buſineſs wearies him; ſerious reading fatigues him. He muſt paſs his life on a bed of down. Does he work? The moments ſeem hours to him. Does he amuſe himſelf? The hours are then like moments to him. All his time is loſt; he knows not what he is doing in it; he lets it paſs away like the waters under the arch of a bridge. Aſk him what he has done in the morning: he has done nothing; for he has lived without thinking whether he lived or not. He has ſlept as long as he could; has been long dreſſing; talked to the firſt comer; and taken ſome turns in his chamber. Dinner comes on the table: the afternoon he ſpends like the morning, and his whole life like this day. Once more: ſuch a man is good for nothing. Even pride muſt render him inſupportable to himſelf, in a ſtate ſo unworthy of a man.

Such a man will not only be incapable of doing what is good, but will, by degrees, fall into the greateſt evils. Pleaſure will betray him. It is not for nothing that the fleſh deſires to be indulged: after having appeared indolent and inſenſible, it will ſuddenly become furious and brutal. You will not perceive this fire till it is too late to extinguiſh it. You muſt alſo fear, leſt your ſentiments in religion, mixing

with your ſoftneſs, ſhould engage you, by degrees, in a ſingular life, which will have ſome outward regularities, but nothing ſolid within.

A ſerious indolence, where the paſſions bear a lamentable ſway, is productive of an obſcure, ſlothful, and corrupted life; at which even the world, bad as it is, cannot avoid being ſhocked. Thus, by little and little, you will quit the world, for an indolent life; which will be little leſs contrary to the mind of God, than the moſt depraved paſſions. But let us conſider how to arm againſt this evil. With regard to your buſineſs, you ſhould regulate it, doing all things by rule; and ſo ſettle your affairs as ſeldom to break in upon the plan you lay down. Neglect not your meditative reading in the morning; let that be the firſt thing you do, while people may imagine you are in bed. Towards evening read again. If you then find in yourſelf an inclination for a little recollection, by yielding to it, you will accuſtom yourſelf to ſpend the evening like the morning.

You ſhould receive every one with civility. Let there be no air of pride, nor affectation, nor forwardneſs. Shew yourſelf to be a gentleman: ſalute and behave well to all the world, yet converſe with but few. Bad company is diſhonourable to all; but eſpecially to a young man, who has not as yet an eſtabliſhed character. You muſt viſit but few, and never thoſe of bad repute. Do not ridicule them, as others do, but quietly avoid them.

Beſides

Beſides your never preferring yourſelf to any one, your manners muſt likewiſe be ſimple and ingenuous; your countenance open; and you muſt obſerve a complacency in your tranſient intercourſes. Let every thing be a proof of nobility, and of a heart that is liberal, friendly, obliging, and affected by merit; ſolicitous to oblige, ſorry when you cannot. Endeavour to ſeaſon a piece of ſervice with what may render it obliging, without making a merit of it. In ſuch conduct pride ſeeks glory, and religion muſt thus ſeek true decency, from motives wholly divine. Nothing is ſo noble, ſo great, ſo heroic, as the heart of a true Chriſtian; but in it there muſt be nothing falſe, nothing affected, nothing but what is ſimple, modeſt, and punctual in all things.

As to real friends, you muſt chuſe them with much caution; and conſequently limit yourſelf to a very ſmall number: no intimate friend, that does not fear God, and whom the pure maxims of religion does not govern in all things; otherwiſe he may prove your ruin, be his kindneſs for you ever ſo great. Make choice, as much as you can, of friends a little older than yourſelf; they will occaſion you to ripen ſooner. Let your heart be open to your true friends; no ſecrecy with them but the ſecret of another, except in things you fear they may be prejudiced againſt.

Be diſintereſted, faithful, active, and conſtant in your friendſhip; but never blind to the

defects or different degrees of merit in your friends; let them find you serviceable to them, and never let their troubles cause your affections to cool.

Treat your servants well. Let your authority be firm and gentle; be attentive to their wants; do them all the good you can; and cause them to be attached to you through love: bear with their faults when they are not essential, and they are willing to mend them. Lastly, remember, (and I finish as I began) that indolence enervates every thing, and makes all things wearisome; that it exhausts the strength of all the virtues and qualities of the soul, even in the opinion of the world. A man, given up to indolence, is a weak and insignificant man. He is as if he was not. Dread, therefore, this defect, which is the source of so many others: watch and pray; but, above all things, watch against yourself.

LETTER XXIII.

Advice on Meditation, and the method of Reading.

I AM persuaded that you ought every morning to meditate a little in the following manner: first, place yourself in the presence of God, that is,

ſs, adore him as preſent, and offer yourſelf to him entirely; then invoke of him the help of his holy ſpirit for the great buſineſs you are about. You know how we have proceeded when together: remember you cannot do it with too much ſimplicity. You are not to look for God in fine ideas, or extraordinary meltings of the heart. Speak to him ſimply, without much reflection, and from the fullneſs of your heart, as to a good friend.

At firſt, content yourſelf with a quarter of an hour in this meditation, although you ſhould find it unprofitable and wearifome; but if it can be done without difficulty, and it nouriſhes your heart, go as far as half an hour. Generally ſpeaking, it is beſt to do little at firſt, and to accuſtom yourſelf to it by degrees. In the evening you may do the ſame for another quarter of an hour, and you will find in time this other quarter will be lengthened to half an hour. You may finiſh with a diſpoſition to give yourſelf up to God in thoſe points you have meditated on, and by thankſgiving for the good affections you have received.

As to your ſpiritual reading, be not ſatisfied with believing and taſting the truths you read, but apply them to your wants. Endeavour, not only for your pleaſure to taſte, but to digeſt the heavenly bread, ſo that it may nouriſh you. Thoſe who ſwallow with eagerneſs, and haſtily, far from being ſubſtantially nouriſhed, bring on dangerous indigeſtions. It is, therefore, better

to read but little, and read it attentively, and with recollection. When reading improves you, it becomes a kind of meditation, whereas the reading of persons who are not simple enough, is but empty, and to very little purpose. Too great a variety of objects in spiritual reading, as in other things, dissipates the mind, prevents its entering into itself, and deprives it of its own nourishment.

LETTER XXIV.

I AM not surprized at the trouble you meet with from many things that are in opposition to God: it is the natural effect of the change of your heart. You wish to enjoy a certain calm, in which you might be at liberty to employ yourself in those things you are affected with, and be delivered from all that causes your wounds to bleed afresh. But God permits that what has formerly engaged your affections and your time, should now trouble you, and serve to increase your penitence. Bear then this cross in peace, and wait till God relieves you. He will do it in his own time, and not in yours. Nevertheless, reserve some portion of your time for thinking on him, and of yourself, with regard to him. Be upon your guard against your inclinations

inclinations and habits: remember you bear the gifts of God in an earthen veſſel.

To perform many difficult actions is not the thing wanted: do the ſmalleſt and moſt common, with a heart devoted to God, and as a man who is deſirous of anſwering the only end of his creation. You muſt be ſober at table, and ſober every where elſe, ſober in talking, ſober in your expenſes, ſober in judging, ſober in your choice of company, ſober in your amuſements, and even ſober in your wiſdom and forecaſt, according to St. Paul's advice. It is this univerſal ſoberity, in the uſe of the beſt things, that the love of God makes us obſerve; and to perform every thing with a delightful ſimplicity. They who are poſſeſſed of it, are neither fretful, nor ſcrupulous; but have within them a principle of love, which ſets the heart at liberty; which ſweetings every thing, and without reſtraint or trouble, inſpires us with a certain delicacy never to diſpleaſe God, and which ſtops us when we are tempted to do wrong.

In this ſtate we endure what is the common lot of men; fatigues, diſappointments, difficulties with ourſelves as well as with others, temptations, and dejections. But if our croſſes are in common with the world, the motives for bearing them are very different. We know in Jeſus Chriſt our Saviour the value and power of the croſs: it purifies, detaches us from the world, and renews our minds. We ſee God

in all things; but we never see him so clearly, nor with so much advantage, as in our sufferings and humiliations. The cross is the power of God; the more it destroys us, the more it advances the new being in Jesus Christ, to raise a new man out of the ruins of the old Adam.

If you can find out some sensible friend, who fears God, unburden your heart, by telling him such things as you think him capable of bearing. But consider God as the good friend of the heart, and that nobody can comfort like him. There is none who, like him, understands all at once, who enters into all our troubles, and adapts himself to our necessities before we ask him.

Show an even sober conduct, without the affectation of what is good; but be resolute in virtue, that the profligate may have no hopes of drawing you aside: you will the easier get rid of them, and they will importune you less, when they find you faithfully attached to religion; and that you will not be drawn back from it.

Rely not on your own strength, your resolutions, nor on your most vigilant precautions (which however you ought to take with the greatest exactness and care), but solely in the goodness of God, who has loved you before you loved him, and even when you ungratefully offended him.

LETTER

LETTER XXV.

I HOPE, that in this ſtate of ſeperation and bitterneſs, you will find (far from the help of the creatures) the moſt powerful conſolation. God will make you taſte what he is in himſelf, when every thing elſe fails you. When we reſign ourſelves up to God, in time of peace and quiet, we neither know what we want, nor what we promiſe: though our reſignation ſhould be ſincere, yet it is very ſuperficial; but when the cup of bitterneſs preſents itſelf to us, nature trembles, it fears, and is ſorrowful; it ſays, *Let this cup paſs from me!* Bleſſed are they who can ſuppreſs this repugnance, and ſay with the Son of God, *Nevertheleſs, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*

The ſtate of ſorrow which dejects your heart, and the ſight of an afflicting object, which is always before your eyes, makes me fear for your health. Take care of it, and turn to advantage any little comforts, that ſhall come in your way: do every thing in ſimplicity.

LETTER XXVI.

A VARIETY of buſineſs hurries you away with rapidity. I have often obſerved, that you are always in a hurry to go from one buſineſs to

another, though each in particular engages you too much. You are not ſlow, but tedious. You waſte a great deal of time on each buſineſs, not through the ſlowneſs of your operations, for on the contrary they are hurried; but by the multitude of affairs you crowd into them. You wiſh to ſay every thing on each ſubject that has any relation to it. You always fear you do not ſay enough. This makes each buſineſs too long, and obliges you to paſs from one affair to another, in haſte, and yet with delay. If you would cut them ſhort, each buſineſs would be eaſy, and find its place without being retarded: but in order to this, you ſhould ſtudy to retrench every thing that is not eſſential.

To be ſober in words, you muſt be ſo in thoughts. You muſt not follow your natural eagerneſs to perſuade others. You will not reach the ſource of this evil, but by often ſilencing your ſpirit by means of inward ſilence. Thus you would ſee, at the proper ſeaſon, each buſineſs in a clear and ſimple light. You would ſay in two words all you had to ſay, without loſing ſo much time to perſuade. You would be leſs burdened, more at liberty, more eaſy, more regular, and ſteady with regard to yourſelf and your neighbour. Beſides, this ſilence, which would ſhorten the manner of expediting your outward buſineſs, would accuſtom you to tranſact your affairs in the ſpirit of prayer: without this you will be more and more fatigued and exhauſted; the affairs which prejudice

judice the ſoul in its inward buſineſs, will likewiſe prejudice the health of the body.

This calm and leiſure will do all your buſineſs, which hard labour and hurry can never effect. Liſten a little leſs to your thoughts, that you may be in a ſtate to liſten more to God. I dare promiſe, if you obſerve this, and are faithful to the inward light on all occaſions, you will ſoon be eaſed in all your duties; but fitter to ſerve your neighbour; and at the ſame time carry on the buſineſs of your employment better.

It is not enough that you love good books: you ſhould yourſelf be a living good book. You ſhould be inwardly in reality what theſe good books teach. The ſaints, in former times, had more troubles and croſſes than you: it was in the midſt of all theſe troubles they preſerved and increaſed their peace, their ſimplicity, their life of pure faith, and their prayer almoſt without ceaſing.

Reſerve to yourſelf times for inward nouriſhment, which may be as ſources of grace for other times: even in tranſacting your outward affairs, move in peace with that ſpirit of brevity which will cauſe you to die to yourſelf.

LETTER XXVII.

Conſolation on the Death of a young Perſon.

I RECEIVED your letter on the loſs you have lately ſuſtained. I have a deep ſenſe both of the loſs, and the grief it occaſions. But I cannot be troubled for your heart, not doubting but it remains in that true peace, which is inſeparable from an acquieſcence with the whole will of God. I pity you on account of this ſecret wound, by which the heart is as it were dried up. But grief is the hidden life of ſouls here on earth; for it is by thoſe thoughts which death occaſion, that the beginning of a new life is formed in us. All that ſeems to corrupt the grain in the earth, makes it vegetate and grow up for the harveſt.

LETTER XXVIII.

Conſolation on the Death of a Son.

THE great loſs you have ſuſtained eſcapes not my ſight; but God has taken what belonged to him, and not to us. Who dare ſay to him, Why haſt thou done thus?—This language is far from you. You know he is not accountable

accountable for what he doeth. His good pleasure is the supreme reason; besides, we may always see in the most severe strokes of his fatherly hand, a secret design of mercy. He takes away in a happy hour, certain weak men, whom perhaps the delusions of the world might have caused to fall. He is hasted away to prevent a miserable fall. O what wonders shall we see in the next world, that escape us in this! then shall we sing the song of joy and everlasting thanks, for events that made us weep here. Alas, in the present darkness, we know not what is really good for us, or really evil. If God should do what pleases us, all would be lost. He saves us by breaking our chains, and making us sorrowful. The same stroke that saves him we love, by taking him from the midst of iniquity, prepares us by his death for our own. What can we desire for ourselves and our friends in this vain and corrupted world? If it be true that faith and love constitute the life of our soul, can we weep, because God loves us better than we know how to love ourselves; shall we lament his taking out of temptation and sin, those that are dear to us? Does he hurt us by contracting the days of misery? Do we desire a continuance of danger, and greater temptations? We would have every thing that flatters self-love, in order to make us forget ourselves in this place of exile.

Your son was prosperous in the midst of a corrupted world; it is this afflicts you in the

loss

loſs of him. But his ſucceſs was perhaps the cauſe that the thread of his life was cut ſhort, by a deſign replete with mercy, both for him and his friends. Let us then adore God, and be ſilent. Nothing but prayer can comfort us. As ſoon as we are with God, by an union of heart in the ſimple view of faith, we are in prayer. And every occupation, even in the moſt holy things, that does not place us in this preſence, and this ſociety of love, is rather a ſtudy than a prayer. At this time nothing but the ſociety of the true Comforter can comfort us. Let us then reſt in ſilence; he will comfort us, and we ſhall find all in him alone. Bleſſed are thoſe who deſire no other comfort! This is pure and inexhauſtible.

LETTER XXIX.

IT ſeems to me neceſſary that you ſhould have joined together great ſtrictneſs, and great liberty. Strictneſs will make you faithful, and liberty will make you courageous. If you were ſtrict without being at liberty, there would be a danger of falling into ſlavery, and unneceſſary ſcruples; and if you were at liberty without being ſtrict, you would ſoon run into negligence and remiſſneſs of manners. Strictneſs alone, contracts the mind, and liberty alone, enlarges

it too much. Thoſe who have no experience in the ways of God, thinks theſe two virtues incompatible. They underſtand by being ſtrict, a living always in reſtraint, and in an uneaſy ſcrupulous fear, which ſo ſtraitens the ſoul that it quarrels with itſelf about the ſmalleſt matters. They call being at liberty, the having a looſe conſcience, not being careful of ſmall matters, but content with avoiding great faults, counting ſuch only great crimes; quieting and comforting themſelves with this thought, that they do not imagine there is any great harm in their actions.

It was not thus St. Paul conceived matters, when he ſaid to thoſe, whom he endeavoured to make perfect Chriſtians, *Stand faſt in liberty*; but it is in the liberty wherewith Chriſt hath made us free: *ſtand faſt in liberty*, becauſe the Saviour hath called us to liberty; but let not that liberty be an occaſion or pretence for doing wrong. It ſeems then to me that true ſtrictneſs conſiſts in obeying God in all things, and following that light which ſhows us our duty, and that grace which inclines us to do it; making it our chief ſtudy to pleaſe God in all things, and always to do, not only what is agreeable to him, but what is moſt ſo, without endeavouring to deceive him by the difference of great and ſmall ſins of omiſſion or commiſſion. For though it is true there is a diſtinction in theſe things, yet there ought to be none for a ſoul that has concluded to refuſe nothing

to

to God, of all that it has to beſtow. And it is in this ſenſe the apoſtle ſays, that *the law is not made for a righteous man;* that is, the reſtraining and threatening law: but he has a ſuperior law which raiſes him above all this, and makes him enter into the liberty of the children of God; which is the deſire of always pleaſing his heavenly Father.

LETTER XXX.

AVOID diſſipation, and dread your too lively imagination and taſte for the world. It is not ſufficient that you avoid ſeeing too many people, you muſt likewiſe not ſuffer your vivacity to be too much excited by the few you do ſee: you muſt retrench all long converſations; and even in ſhort ones, you ſhould not indulge a certain activity of ſpirit, which is incompatible with recollection.

What I require is an union with God, at the bottom of the heart, which his grace affords us, when we drop our own activity that diſſipates us, and diverts us with creaturely amuſements. Indeed, if you do not drop this activity, which proceeds from nature and habit, you will inſenſibly loſe all that is good within you: and notwithſtanding your pious intentions,

tions, you will find yourself reduced to a devotion of transitory and superficial sentiments, accompanied with great frailties, and a mixture of many things contrary to former grace.

LETTER XXXI.

THE best reparation for our past vanities, is being humble and content that God should humble us. The best of all penances is, to do, daily and hourly, the will of God rather than our own. Let us then think only of the present, and not be inquisitive about the future. This future is not ours, and perhaps never may be. Let us only think of the present which presses on us; it is a fidelity to the present that prepares us for being faithful in the future. With regard to the present, these are what appear to me to be the principal.

First. I think you should avoid all company that might not only lead you into gross errors, but awaken in you a taste for worldly vanities, dissipate you, and render you lukewarm towards God, dry up your heart for spiritual exercises, and destroy your willingness to attend to the advice you stand in need of. It is a happiness to be removed far from the world, and

and placed in the liberty of the children of God.

Nevertheleſs, it is not fitting, either with regard to decency or your ſtation, or to your inward wants, that you ſhould retire into a deep ſolitude. You muſt then, when it is neceſſary to relax your mind, ſee thoſe who afford you a moderate amuſement; but avoid ſuch company as tends to diſſipate, ſlacken, and draw you away, contrary to your own liking, and who would cauſe the old wounds of your heart to bleed afreſh. Theſe falſe friends you ſhould dread, avoid them quietly, and put a bar in the way to prevent their return.

With regard to prayer, you cannot do wrong in the good diſpoſition which God has given you, provided you are not too much aiming to perform it in an excellent manner. Seek for an acquaintance with God, not by artful thoughts which you frame on purpoſe to ſpeak to him, for a certain time, but by thoſe ſentiments with which your heart is filled. If you taſte his preſence, and feel the attraction of love, acknowledge your happineſs, and that it is great goodneſs in the Almighty to ſuffer himſelf to be loved by a heart ſo unworthy of his love.

Employ yourſelf during the day in the duties of your ſtate; ſuch as regulating your expenſes according to your income, watching over your ſervants that they commit no offence; educat-

ing

ing your children with a mild authority; ſatisfying the obligations of decency; and edifying all who ſee you, though you never ſpeak to them of devotion.

All this is ſimple, regular, and moderate, and enters into common life; but all reverts continually to God. How comfortable will you find the practice of it! *One day in the houſe of God, is better than a thouſand in the tents of ungodlineſs.**

LETTER XXXII.

YOU muſt not believe, that the preſence of God is imaginary, when it does not give you the light and power to ſay fine things. This preſence is never more real or more beneficial than when it teaches us to be ſilent, to humble ourſelves, not to hearken to ſelf-love, and to remain with lowlineſs and fidelity in the obſcurity of faith. This taſte of ſelf-renunciation and lowlineſs, is much more profitable than bright ideas, and lively ſentiments.

* Pſ. lxxxiv. 10.

LETTER XXXIII.

WE ſhould turn our defects to advantage, by an entire diffidence of your own hearts. I am glad you do not find in yourſelf any reſource, to enable you to ſuſtain that kind of life you have made choice of. I ſhould fear all things for you, if you thought yourſelf eſtabliſhed in what is good, and if you promiſed to perſevere in it; but I hope all things, when I ſee that you ſincerely deſpair of yourſelf. O how weak are we, when we think ourſelves ſtrong! O how ſtrong are we in God, when we feel ourſelves weak!

It is the will which God requires; the will muſt be attended with action, but God frequently does not require great performances from us. To order our ſervants, to manage our affairs well, to educate our children properly, to bear our croſſes, to fly from the vain joys of the world; not to flatter our pride in any thing: to ſuppreſs our natural haughtineſs; to endeavour to become ſimple, plain, and lowly; to be ſilent; to be recollected; and to accuſtom ourſelves to a life hidden with Jeſus Chriſt in God; theſe are the works with which God is pleaſed.*

You wiſh, you ſay, for croſſes to evidence your love for God. Be content with your

* Only to be performed by the help of his grace.

preſent

preſent croſſes: before you look for others; bear thoſe you have with patience; liſten not to what you like or diſlike. Endeavour to keep yourſelf, on all occaſions, in that general diſpoſition of unreſerved dependance on the ſpirit of grace, which is a continual death to ſelf. Refuſe nothing to God, and never anticipate him, with regard to thoſe things in which you are as yet ignorant of his will. Each day will bring its croſſes and its ſacrifices. When God ſhall pleaſe to change your ſtate, he will inſenſibly prepare you for it. My wiſh is, that God may deſtroy in you the whole life of ſelf-love.

LETTER XXXIV.

IT is the Spirit of God that inſenſibly accompliſhes the moſt arduous things. The diſappointments of life overcome us; its croſſes deject us; we want patience and gentleneſs, or a gentle and ſteady courage, to render us capable to perſuade others. God alone holds in his hands the hearts of men: he ſupports ours, and opens our neighbours. *Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh in vain.** By depending on the ſpirit of grace, you will do

* Pſ. cxxvii. 1.

more

more in your outward duties, than by all your uneasy and eager strivings.

I bless God for it, that you are tired of your own spirit. Woe to those who confide in it. Blessed are they who, being weary of it, seek repose in the renunciation of self-love. If after having tasted the goodness of God in retirement, you should return to what the world esteems an honest life, you will fall very low; and, by a remissness so unfaithful to grace, will deserve such a loss. I hope this will not attend you; God loves you well, seeing he gives you no peace in a medium between him and the world. God calls us to all perfection, and prepares us for it by the attraction of his grace: wherefore Jesus Christ says to his disciples, *Be ye perfect. as your Father in heaven is perfect.** And on this account he has taught us to pray, *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven.*† All are called to this perfection on earth; but the generality are dismayed, and draw back.

Be not of the number of those who, having eaten of the manna in the wilderness, regretted the loss of the onions of Egypt. It is perseverance alone that is crowned.

* Matthew iv. 48. † vi. 10.

LETTER

LETTER XXXV.

THE work of God is not done in us, but by diſpoſſeſſing us of ourſelves, ſo as to remove every reſource of confidence and complacency in ſelf-love. You wiſh to find yourſelf good, upright, ſtrong, and incapable of every thing that is bad. If you ſhould find yourſelf in this ſtate, you would be ſo much the worſe, as you imagined yourſelf good. We ſhould ſee ourſelves poor, find nothing in ourſelves but miſery, deſpair of ſelf, hope for nothing but in God, and exerciſe an humble patience without flattery. As to any thing elſe, as theſe things which trouble you, are but involuntary ſentiments, it ſuffices that the will is not conſenting to them. By this you will gain the advantage of humiliation, without having the infidelity of adhering to ſuch corrupt ſentiments.

Live in Jeſus Chriſt, and live for him. The chief thing for you is littleneſs: reſerve nothing through courage, or human wiſdom. Be tractable. Learn to bear with others, by being reduced to bear with yourſelf.

LETTER XXXVI.

To endeavour to raiſe ourſelves up from the Remiſſneſs into which we have fallen.

I CANNOT, my dear daughter, ſay any thing more proper to you than the words of St. John to the angel, that is, the biſhop of the church of Epheſus:—*Remember, therefore, from whence thou art fallen, and repent; and do the firſt works: or elſe I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candleſtick out of his place.* It is thus the Spirit of God loves men without flattering them; he loves them, and threatens them. He does not even threaten them but through love. He alarms them with the view of trouble, to the end that men may not compel him to make them ſuffer. See how the moſt perfect men eaſily and by degrees fall away without great watchfulneſs. Here is the angel of one of the moſt holy churches of the eaſt, in thoſe days, when religion was in ſo flouriſhing a ſtate: this angel falls; he forgets his former love, his recollection, his prayer, his good works, (in which he had formerly been employed) he grows remiſs and diſſipated. At firſt his wandering and fall were imperceptible to himſelf. He ſays to himſelf, 'In what have I done 'wrong? Is not my conduct good and regular 'in the ſight of the world? Is not ſome con-'ſolation requiſite?'

Thus

Thus are we ingenious to deceive ourſelves, and diſguiſe our remiſſneſs. The Holy Spirit ſays, ‘ Open your eyes, and ſee from whence ‘ you are fallen. You are fallen below your ‘ former place! Remember your peaceful ſoli- ‘ tude, your deſire for recollection, and your ‘ faithfulneſs in avoiding every thing that might ‘ diſturb it. If you do not remember this, ‘ others have not forgotten it. Where is now ‘ this fervor? There is nothing to be ſeen but ‘ amuſements without, and wearineſs within. ‘ When the amuſements are over, you are like ‘ a different perſon.’

It is thus people fall by degrees, and under plauſible pretences, from a ſtate of ſincere death to ſelf, into a remiſſneſs, where they ſee ſpring up again the groſſeſt properties of ſelf-love. You ſhould reflect on the ſtate from whence you are fallen. You ſhould regret the loſs of that firſt love which nouriſhed your heart, and return to your firſt works, which you have ſo ſlothfully abandoned for the works of vanity. You ſhould ſay with the prodigal ſon, *I will ariſe, and go to my father, and will ſay to him, Father, I have ſinned againſt heaven, and before thee, and am no more worthy to be called thy ſon.* If at firſt you find any coldneſs in this path, receive it humbly, as a penance which you ſtand in great need of. If you fail to return quickly into his fatherly boſom, this is what he will do: *I will come*, ſays he, *and remove thy candleſtick out of his place.* He will take from you the

light you make no use of, and will leave you in darkness. He will remove you from his precious graces, which you have so long trampled under foot, and give them to some other soul who is more simple, more tractable, and more faithful. You must return to your reading, your prayers, your silence, your first simplicity, and lowliness.

LETTER XXXVII.

LOOK not futurity in the face: for we are bewildered and lost, when we dive into it. Our foresight only serves to disquiet us. Submit yourself daily. The submission of each day is the true daily bread. We are fed, like Jesus Christ, with the will of his Father, which Providence brings us for the present moment. This heavenly bread is like the manna. We must not lay it by in store. An uneasy and distrustful man, who would gather for the next day, would see it immediately corrupt.

Submit yourself in all things that are required of you. Be simple and lowly, without reasoning, prepared for every thing, and adhering to nothing; high or low; praised, or dispraised; enjoying the confidence of those who live with, or being envied and suspected. Provided you have neither high-mindedness, self-wisdom, nor

self-will

ſelf-will in any thing, all will go well. This is a great deal, but not too much. Obſerve ſilence as much as you can, and mortify your ſpirit.

LETTER XXXVIII.

I AM pleaſed to learn from yourſelf, that you are preſerved in obedience, and enjoy that peace of God, which is inſeparable from it. God will take care of every thing for you. Depend on him alone, and you will find in him every thing that is agreeable to his ſpirit.—Remember the way of faith, which you have ſo much deſired to follow, is not ſolid, but ſo far as it detaches us from perſons, books, and outward helps: in a word, from every thing that is not God, and his will. Once more then, be obedient; and obſerve ſilence as much as you can.

The ſervice of God conſiſts not in words, nor vague thoughts, nor inſenſible affections, nor elevated ideas; but in good works. To be ſilent, to obey, to reſtrain ourſelves, to renounce in all the moſt difficult caſes our own taſte, as well as our will, to embrace the croſs, and think that by it alone we can find God, is the truth of the kingdom of God in us. This is worſhipping him in ſpirit and in truth.

As to your defects, I am not surprized at them; but I thank God you see them without flattering yourself, or being discouraged by them. Always be courageous, and strive to conquer yourself: but do it without vexation, and without dependance on your own strength. Let your defects prove of advantage, by their humbling you, at the same time not delaying to correct them.

LETTER XXXIX.

I HOPE, my dear neice, that God, who has called you to train up your sisters, will deliver you from your own spirit, and give you his spirit to perform his work. The work of God is love, and to die to yourself, that he alone may live in you. Ought you not to die to yourself, in order to help others to the same happy experience? Ought you not to love, in order to inspire others with love? No instruction is effectual, but by example. Begin then by doing, and afterwards you may instruct. Action speaks and persuades: words alone are but vanity.

Be patient with those who advance but slowly; there will be danger of discouraging them by your impatience: the more occasion you have for power, the more care you must take

take to join with it mildneſs and conſolation.—Suffer: it is only by the croſs we receive the Spirit of Jeſus Chriſt, and his power to win ſouls. Superiors, without croſſes, are barren to bring forth children of grace. A croſs, well borne, acquires authority, and gives a bleſſing to all we do. It is by ſuffering we learn to have compaſſion, and to miniſter conſolation. Speak little, hear much, think more of knowing the diſpoſition of thoſe under you, that you may proportion yourſelf to their neceſſities, than of ſaying fine things to them.

Show an openneſs of heart, and make each one ſee, by experience, that there is ſafety and conſolation in opening her mind to you. Avoid all ſeverity; correct even with mildneſs and diſcretion. Be ſlow in deciding, but be reſolute.

Correct yourſelf, that you may be able to correct others. Let them tell you your faults, and believe what they ſay with regard to thoſe which ſelf-love may conceal from you.

LETTER XL.

YOUR want of health a little diſturbs me; but I hope the country air, with ſome exerciſe, and true repoſe of mind, will reſtore it to you. As to myſelf, I am like a ſkeleton, that walks

and ſpeaks, but ſleeps and eats little. An extenſive dioceſe is a heavy burden at ſixty-three. I have a great deal too much buſineſs, and you have perhaps not enough to keep you from being weary: invent ſome employ, which may revive your ſpirits. The days are tedious, though the years are ſhort.

Conſider, if you were in the gay world, you would hear a great deal of wicked diſcourſe; you would ſee many troubleſome and deſpicable people with diſtinguiſhed names; you would be ſurrounded with ſnares and infectious examples; you would not think ſeriouſly either of God, yourſelf, your death, nor your ſalvation: you would become, like others, intoxicated, and hardened. Is it not better to remain in ſome degree of affliction at a diſtance from the world, under the hand of God, who will make you taſte the conſolations of religion, and diſengage you from the falſe ſatisfactions he deprives you of? The world only gives pleaſures of vanity. Beſides, it is full of thorns, troubles, ungenerous proceedings, and deceitful people; we muſt be very much depraved, when living far from evil is painful to us. For three or four years, I ſaw here a great part of the army, and the court. Though I had many inſtances of their civility, I find myſelf much eaſed by their abſence.

Shake off the yoke of ſuperfluity; be rich without money. You are happy if you deſpiſe, for the love of God, all you are not in poſſeſſion of.

EXTRACTS

EXTRACTS

FROM

LETTERS

PUBLISHED 1777.

LETTER I.

THE loſs which we have had of ſo many relations and friends, my dear ſiſter, declares to us that this life is only borrowed, and that God alone eſſentially poſſeſſeth immortality. What ought to be our comfort is, that we ſhall be re-united in him, if we attach ourſelves conſtantly to him.

The troubles you ſpeak of ought to be more precious than pleaſures, if you have faith. Calvary is in this world the general ſtation of a Chriſtian; and if he ſometimes mounts upon Tabor, it is only for an inſtant.

I am very glad to have ſuch good accounts of little Michael. It is a plant, which will produce excellent fruit, if carefully cultivated. Much depends on a happy culture. We be-

come every thing or nothing, according to the education we receive.

You regret that we do not ſee one another; but neither our figures nor our words form our friendſhip: provided our affections and thoughts unite us, what ſignifies our perſons being at a diſtance? When we love one another in God, we ſee one another always, for God is every where: he ought to be the centre of all our ſentiments, as he is of our ſouls.

I embrace you moſt cordially, and ſet an high value on your letters; they recall the memory of a father I knew but too little, and of a mother whoſe life was a conſtant leſſon of virtue. I am beyond all expreſſion a moſt affectionate, &c.

LETTER II.

EVERY perſon who is truly pious, is patient, gentle, and humble; unſuſpecting of ill, never ſplenetick, and conceals, when he cannot excuſe, the faults of his neighbour.

True devotion is charity, and without it nothing we can do is of uſe to ſalvation. Falſe devotees do little leſs injury to the cauſe of religion, than the openly profane; always ready to kindle againſt thoſe who do not agree with them

them in their humours and opinions, they are agitated by a reſtleſs, impetuous, perſecuting zeal; and are commonly either fanatical or ſuperſtitious, hypocrites, or ignorant. Jeſus Chriſt does not ſpare them in the goſpel, that he may teach us to be on our guard againſt them.

Jan. 2, 1749.

LETTER III.

I WAS too much the friend of your father, and am too much your friend, to ſuffer you to go aſtray as you now do, without recalling you to yourſelf. Is it poſſible that that dear child, whom I have ſeen ſo gentle, good, and virtuous in his father's houſe, has ſo totally forgot what he was, as to become rude, inſolent, and irreligious? It is with the utmoſt difficulty I can perſuade myſelf that it is ſo; but I am ſo often aſſured of it, and by the company with whom you aſſociate, that I can no longer doubt.

I beg of you to come and ſee me, and in the effuſions of a heart which tenderly loves you, I will ſay to you, not what anger inſpires, not what prejudice ſuggeſts, not what is bitter in reproaches, but all the ſincereſt attachment

can dictate, to withdraw you from that abyſs into which bad company has hurried you.

You will neither find me an imperious monitor, nor an angry pedagogue, but a friend, a brother, who will ſpeak to you as he would to himſelf, with the ſame lenity and the ſame calmneſs. I know that youth is fiery, and that there is great difficulty in eſcaping from the ways of the world, when we are rich, and given up to paſſions. But do not honour, decency, reaſon, and religion ſpeak more powerfully than the appetites and ſenſes?

What is man, my dear friend, if he takes no counſel but of his corrupted heart? Alas! I find within me, as well as you find in yourſelf, wherewithal to lead me aſtray, if I did not hearken to my conſcience and my duty; for illuſion and corruption are the only portions of humanity.

I expect you with the greateſt impatience, to ſtretch forth my arms, and embrace you. We will bewail together the loſs of a father, who was ſo neceſſary to you; I will endeavour to give you ſuch advice, as to make him live again in you, by the excellence of your morals. Do not diſgrace his memory, by the ſcandal of a diſorderly life.

If you will deign to hearken to me, I am confident, that the plan of life which I ſhall trace out to you, will reſtore every thing as it ſhould be. Do not be afraid; God will inſpire us:

us: God does not abandon thoſe who return to him.

I ſhall not go abroad to-morrow, that I may receive you.

LETTER IV.

IS it poſſible, my dear ſir, that you not only did not come to me, as I requeſted you would, but that you took care to be denied when I came to ſee you? Alas! what would your father ſay, to whom you promiſed in his dying moments, that you would place entire confidence in my advice, and that you would always make it your duty to cultivate my friendſhip? Once more, what would he ſay? Am not I the ſame perſon who have carried you ſo often in my arms, who with the greateſt pleaſure have ſeen you growing, who have giving you your firſt inſtructions, and to whom you have teſtified the ſtrongeſt attachment?

Would you have me fall upon my knees, to induce you to reſtore me to your friendſhip? I will do ſo;—nothing ſhall be too much for me, when I am to recall a friend to his duty.

If you had not a noble heart, and a good underſtanding, I ſhould deſpair of your reformation, and of my own advice; but you have inherited

herited a ſoul formed for virtue, and an uncommon ſagacity. Do you imagine that it can be a pleaſure to me to find fault with you? None but falſe devotees find ſatisfaction in putting themſelves into a paſſion. I have happily read the goſpel, which is the rule both of your conduct and name, enough to know how Jeſus Chriſt received ſinners, and how attentive we ought to be not to extinguiſh the ſmoaking lamp, nor to break the bruiſed reed. I have not forgot that John the Evangeliſt got on horſeback, notwithſtanding his advanced age, to ſearch after a young man whom he had bred up, and who avoided him. Beſides, have not you long known me for a man who is neither haughty nor peeviſh, and who can compaſſionate human frailty? The more you avoid me, the more I ſhall think you guilty. Do not hearken to your companions, but let your heart ſpeak, and I ſhall inſtantly ſee you. Mine prompts me never to abandon you; I will perſecute you becauſe I love you, and I will give you no reſt till we are reconciled.

It is becauſe I am your beſt friend that I ſeek to find you, at a time when ſcarce any of your relations will hear your name mentioned.

If you dread my remonſtrances, I ſhall ſay nothing to you, becauſe I ſhall be convinced that you will accuſe yourſelf, and allow me no time to ſpeak; try at leaſt one viſit; and if that is not agreeable, you ſhall not ſee me more. But I know your heart, I know my own,

own, and I am certain that after one interview, you will have no deſire to leave me.

I ought to have a greater aſcendency over your mind, who have known you theſe twenty years, than all the young aſſociates who ſurround you, to devour your eſtate, and are your friends only to ruin your health and reputation.

If my tears can affect you, I aſſure you they flow at this inſtant, and from the moſt precious motives in the world; religion and friendſhip. Come and dry them up, it will prove to me that you ſtill remember your father, and are ſenſible to the diſtreſs of a friend.

Feb. 1, 1750.

LETTER V.

IT is not eaſily expreſſed, my deareſt friend, how much your three viſits have comforted my ſoul. The tears you ſhed in my preſence; the affecting manner in which you promiſed me to amend your paſt life; and endeavour ſeriouſly to re-enter into favour with God; can never be effaced from my memory, nor from my heart.

I always ſaid to myſelf, 'He hath had a 'Chriſtian education; he will return to his 'duty; I ſhall ſee him again; his wanderings 'are but a ſtorm, which will diſperſe.' God be

be praiſed, the calm is returned! It is not to me, but to him alone, that you ſhould be thankful.

Since you wiſh that I ſhould lay down a plan to guide you, I ſhall ſimply trace out ſuch a one as my weak underſtanding, but ſtrong friendſhip, inſpires. It ſhall be ſhort. The commandments of God, may be reduced to a few words. Precepts that are clear and founded upon reaſon, as well as happineſs, have no need of commentary or diſſertation.

Read every morning the parable of the Prodigal Son, and likewiſe ſome religious books in the courſe of the day; not like a ſlave to finiſh his taſk, but as a child of God, who returns to his father, and hopes every thing from his mercy.

Make it a duty to ſcatter ſome charities every day into the boſoms of the poor, that you may repair the wrongs you have done them, in ſquandering on criminal pleaſures and ſuperfluities what was due to them. Renounce theſe companions who have eſtranged you from God, from yourſelf, and from your true friends; and form ſuch new connections as honour, decency, and religion may avow. It is eaſy to diſmiſs debauched aſſociates, without affronting them. Speak openly to them of the plan of life you mean to purſue; propoſe to them to follow it; talk to them only of regretting the paſt, and forming good reſolutions for the future; and they will ſoon diſappear: or if they return, it will be a proof that they have altered their conduct;

conduct; and, then instead of shunning them, receive them with more pleasure than ever.

Take an exact account of your debts and your income, and by your economy you will find wherewith to pay your creditors. A man is always rich, when he is in the habit of depriving himself of indulgencies; as he is always poor, while he refuses himself nothing.

When opportunities offer of enjoying a little society, do not refuse them; because you may be properly employed there, and because you will be secured from the raillery of the world, which is fond of turning piety into ridicule.

Dismiss the servants who were accomplices in your intrigues, and sharers in your guilt. Although, after having exposed them to scandal, it would be proper to set them a good example; yet it is to be dreaded, from the knowledge of your weakness, that they might lay snares to lead you back into the road of perdition.

With your new domesticks, whose abilities and fidelity have been properly recommended to you, you should live as a master who knows the duties of humanity; as a Christian who knows that we are equal in the sight of God, notwithstanding the inequality of conditions. You will set them none but good examples; watch over their manners, without either being a tyrant or a spy; and attach them to you by your gentleness and your beneficence. Nothing

can

can be so flattering as to render those happy who live with us.

You must think of taking some charge upon you, which will give you employment. We always do amiss when we do nothing. Examine your understanding, consult your taste, ask your heart; but above all, address yourself to God, that you may know what is fit for you.

Your friends will think of marrying you, and it is my advice not to defer it too long. Marriage, when made with purity of heart, preserves young people from a multitude of dangers; but do not reckon upon my choosing a wife for you. Your relation, with whom I have happily reconciled you, is a man of sense, honesty, and integrity, and in a situation to marry you properly. Religion and reason ought to be consulted more than inclination, in an establishment that is to last for life. We rarely see marriages happy, which have no other motive than love.

I do not speak to you of your expences, nor of your table: with such principles as I laid down, they must be moderate.

Above all things, let there be no excess in your piety: take no violent courses; they will be a means of your relapsing. The wounds of the soul are not to be healed by a hasty repetition of prayers, but by labouring to reform the heart. The generality of sinners, for want of this method, pass their lives in offending God, and then confessing their sins.

Avoid

Avoid the hypocrite as well as the diſſipated; both the one and the other will hinder you from arriving at the point we propoſe. I will not look upon you as a convert, till you have been a long time proved. It is not eaſy to paſs from libertiniſm to the practice of virtue.

Behold, my dear ſon, my deareſt friend, what I thought is my duty to ſketch out for you. I could not uſe more tenderneſs, if you were my own. It will trouble me greatly, if the reſolutions you ſo lately entered into, in my preſence, ſhould vaniſh. What encourages me is, that you are a man of truth, that you have a regard for me, and are fully convinced that I ſincerely wiſh you well; and in the laſt place, that you have found a diſorderly life to be an aſſemblage of vexation, torment, and remorſe.

Hearken to the voice of a father crying to you as from the bottom of the tomb, that there is no happineſs in this world but for the friends of God; and charging you to keep the promiſe you formerly made of him, of living, with the help of heaven, the life of a good Chriſtian.

Nov. 20, 1750.

LETTER

LETTER VI.

MADAM,

IT is undoubtedly very diſtreſſing to your dear relation, that you will not be reconciled to him, notwithſtanding his viſit, and the humble and affecting letter he has written to you. Is it thus God Almighty deals with us? What will the world think of your piety, when they ſee you ſo exaſperated as to reject the prodigal ſon? For my part, I flew to him as ſoon as I knew that he was gone aſtray, and I hope God will reward me for it.

You are always repeating, Madam, that he has loſt a great deal of money, and that he is a bad man. But what is even the loſs of gold, that you ſhould ſo much regret it. You ought only to be grieved at the abuſe of ſo many good qualities as he poſſeſſes; and think, if he is really a bad man, that he has more need than ever of advice, and the example of the truly good.

It is having a very bad idea of religion, to forſake a young man, becauſe he has committed ſome errors.

Ah! how do you know, that this bad man will not next day be acceptable in the ſight of God, while your ſervices may by no means pleaſe him? For truly one grain of pride is ſufficient to ſpoil the beſt actions. The Phariſee, who faſted two days in the week, was rejected;

and

and the Publican, who humbled himſelf, was juſtified.

Charity, with regard to all men, and always charity! This I ſhall never ceaſe to repeat, as perfectly agreeable to the morals taught in every Chriſtian ſchool.

If the mercy of God depended upon certain devotees, ſinners would be much to be pitied: falſe devotion knows nothing but an exterminating zeal; while God, full of patience, gentleneſs, and forbearance, waits the amendment of all thoſe who have gone aſtray.

Even the blood of Chriſt implores your forgiveneſs; and it is not having a proper reſpect for him, to refuſe your dear relation admittance into your houſe. You are not ignorant that there is more joy in heaven over *one ſinner that repenteth, than over ninety and nine juſt perſons, that need no repentance.* Beſides, will you continue your reſentment, while the angels rejoice? that would be a ſhocking ſort of piety indeed!

It is not for us to decide, whether the heart of a man, who appears to have entered ſeriouſly into himſelf is truly changed. Beſides, as God alone can know the truth, we ought to preſume that he has reformed. Would you think it juſt in your neighbours, who are the witneſſes of your good works, if they ſuppoſed that you acted only from pride? Let us leave to the Searcher of all hearts to pronounce what are the motives of our actions. The brother of the prodigal ſon is condemned in the eyes of religion

religion and humanity, for not being properly affected at his return.

If my letter, contrary to my intention, appears a little ſevere, I beg you will think I ſpeak in ſuch a manner, leſs on your relation's account than your own; for your ſalvation depends upon it. Will you not pardon him, when you have reaſon to preſume that God Almighty hath pardoned him? I cannot think it.

I am with reſpect, &c.

Feb. 5, 1751.

LETTER VII.

THE Seas will very ſoon ſeparate us; but ſuch is the lot of this life, that ſome are ſcattered to the extremities of the world, while others remain always in the ſame place.

If you have not laid in an ample ſtock of piety, I ſhall be exceedingly in fear for you, on a paſſage where all the words you hear will not be thoſe of edification; and in a country where all the examples preſented to you, will not be found the moſt correct models of virtue. America is the earthly paradiſe, where they frequently eat the forbidden fruit. The ſerpent is continually preaching upon the love of riches and pleaſures, and the warmth of the climate ſets the paſſions in commotion.

We

We are not able to reſtrain our paſſions when we perceive no other ſuperior but God, unleſs a lively faith be the principle of our actions.

I perſuade myſelf, that you will frequently beg of God to give you ſtrength to ſupport you againſt all kinds of dangers. Think that he will be as near you in America as in Europe; that his eye ſeeth every where; his juſtice judgeth all; and that it is for him you ought to act. Lead a diligent and regular life; for, ſhould you once be poſſeſſed with a ſpirit of indolence, you will ſoon be beſet by the vices, without being able to defend yourſelf.

Never ſuffer one word to paſs your lips which can be interpreted againſt religion or morals. Even thoſe who ſeemingly applaud, will, in fact, deſpiſe you.

I will pray for you to him who commands the waves, who calms the tempeſts, and who doth not abandon his people wherever found. What comforts me is, that ſouls know no diſtance; for by the ties of religion and the heart, we are always neighbours to one another.

Adieu, and adieu!—I tenderly embrace you!

LETTER VIII.

WELL, my dear friend, what are you doing? It is a long time ſince I ſaw you: I certainly do not deſerve to be deprived of that pleaſure.—You know that I willingly quit my pen, my employment, and my books, when you come to ſee me.

They who come to viſit us, have no occaſion for our ſtudies, nor our buſineſs. I have always made it a law to receive every perſon well who honours me with a viſit, even the man that comes to importune me: it is ſufficient that he is my neighbour. Now judge, after this, if you will be well received.

It is almoſt eighteen days ſince I ſaw———. I am afraid, but I dare not tell you, that——the art of being ſilent is a great virtue: happy they who ſay nothing but what they ought to ſpeak! Accuſtom yourſelf to be ſecret, without affecting diſcretion. Never employ fineſſe; it is a wretched reſource, incompatible with probity, and eaſily diſcovered.

I will tell you more when we meet; but let it be ſoon.

I am, without reſerve, your ſervant and beſt friend.

LETTER IX.

THE education you propoſe giving your children, will be only a varniſh, if it is not founded on religion. There are ſome occaſions, in the courſe of life, where probity is not ſufficiently ſtrong to reſiſt certain temptations; and where the ſoul is debaſed, if it is not elevated by the firm belief of immortality.

It is neceſſary for the wiſdom and happineſs of man, that he ſhould have a view of the Deity from his tendereſt infancy, as the principle and the end of all things: and reaſon and faith ſhould tell him, that it is deſcending to the rank of beaſts to be without either worſhip or law.

It is not by an attention to trifling ceremonies, that you will make your children true Chriſtians. Chriſtianity is the greateſt enemy to phariſaical zeal and ſuperſtition.

You ſhould take a great deal of pains to elevate the ſouls of your three young people, and to convince them, that the greateſt pleaſure of man is to reflect, and to be conſcious of his exiſtence. This is a pleaſure ſo ſublime, and ſo worthy of an heavenly ſpirit, that I look upon him who knows not this happineſs, as a wretched, or, at leaſt, an inſenſible being.

A few, but ſolid books, will make your children well-informed Chriſtians. Let them be

read leſs with an attention to fix them in the memory, than to grave them on the heart. It is not neceſſary to form young people to defend a theſis, but to be obliged, as rational creatures, to convince themſelves of eternal truths.

You ſhould watch carefully to preſerve them ſpotleſs, not by employing informers and ſpies, but by having your ears and your eyes every where to imitate the Deity, whom we do not ſee, but who ſeeth over all.

Be leſs the maſter than the friend of your children; and then they will be tranſparent to your eyes, and even tell their faults themſelves. Young folks have often told me their griefs and their errors, becauſe I always treat them with mildneſs. They will give you the key of their hearts, when they find that you ſincerely wiſh them well, and that it is a pain to you to reprove them.

Take care what ſervants you admit about your children; it is generally through them that youth are corrupted.

Manage ſo as to have an amiable ſerenity conſtantly ſhining on your face, and in your eyes; and that every thing be done as you would have it, without reſtraint or fear.

Attach pleaſures to every kind of ſtudy which you propoſe for your ſons, by exciting a deſire of knowledge, and an impatience of ignorance.

Take care that they have relaxation from

their

their ſtudies, that their memories and judgments may not grow tired.

Inſtruct them, by making them love your documents, not by the fear of puniſhments; and for this purpoſe take care to enliven them by ſome little hiſtories, which may awaken attention.

Learning is like food. The ſtomach of a child requires light nouriſhment; and it is only by degrees that he is accuſtomed to more ſolid or ſubſtantial diet.

When your children have acquired the age of maturity, then is the time to ſpeak to them, as a friend, of the nothingneſs of the pleaſures in which the world places its happineſs; of the misfortunes in which they engage us; the remorſe they excite; the injury they do both to body and ſoul; the abyſs they dig under our ſteps, while they appear only to ſcatter flowers. It will be no difficult matter for you to point out to them the dangerous rocks of ſenſuality, by expreſſions or ſtriking examples; and to perſuade them, that without idleneſs, the greater part of the pleaſures, to which people addict themſelves ſo immoderately, would have no attractions. In idleneſs, as in ſleep, they form to themſelves the moſt brilliant ideas, and repreſent many agreeable chimeras which have no exiſtence.

When a ſon is perſuaded that a father talks only reaſon to him, and ſolely from tenderneſs,

he hearkens to him, and his advice produces the beſt effects.

Laſtly, after having erected this edifice, there ſtill remains what is difficult to determine; I mean the choice of a profeſſion. This is commonly the touchſtone of fathers and mothers, and the moſt critical point for children. If you will be perſuaded by me, you will give them a year to themſelves to reflect upon the kind of life that ſuits them, before you ſpeak to them of one employment in preference to another. The good education they will have received, the knowledge they will have acquired, will naturally lead them to a happy iſſue; and there will be good reaſon to hope they will then decide for themſelves, according to their inclinations, and according to reaſon.

It will then be neceſſary to ſpeak frequently to them of the advantages and diſadvantages of the different conditions of life, and to let them know how much their temporal and eternal intereſt is concerned in the faithful diſcharge of their duty.

After theſe precautions, and after having often implored the aſſiſtance of heaven, your ſons will enter ſteadily upon the plan of life they have choſen; and you will have the conſolation of being able to ſay, that you have regarded their inclinations, and their liberty.

Since Providence has given you wealth, you ſhould ſupport your ſons according to their condition; letting them, however, always feel ſome

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wants, and keeping them always within the bounds of moderation, to teach them, that this life is not the ſtate of our happineſs, and that the higher they are raiſed, the leſs ought they to become proud. Take care to give them money, that they may learn from yourſelf not to become miſers, and that they may have it in their power to aſſiſt the unfortunate. It will be proper to obſerve, with your own eyes, the uſe they make of it; and if you find them addicted either to avarice or prodigality, you ſhould leſſen their allowance.

Laſtly, my dear and reſpectable friend, attend more to the hearts than the underſtandings of your ſons: if the heart is good, all will go well. Circumſtances muſt teach you how to govern them; you ſhould appear ſometimes indulgent, at other times ſevere, but always juſt and candid. Thoſe young people, who will not be wiſe, are diſtreſſed when they are reproved with a ſpirit of equity, becauſe they find, againſt their inclination, they cannot reply.

Leave them a liberal freedom, ſo that their father's houſe may not be their laſt choice: it is neceſſary that they ſhould be happier there than elſewhere, and find thoſe pleaſures which may reaſonably be expected from a parent, who, though a friend to order, is indulgent from affection.

May God heap his bleſſings upon them!—The education which you will give them muſt bloſſom to eternity. There it is that parents

reap the fruit of the good advice they have given to their children, and that worthy fathers find themſelves with their worthy ſons, to be for ever happy.

Aug. 16, 1753.

LETTER X

WHAT has been ſaid with regard to the perſon in queſtion, is only founded on envy and malice. Is there a man in office, or a man who hath written, that has not enemies? Libels and ſatires make an impreſſion only upon weak heads; and you will obſerve, that the moſt vicious and ſpotted characters are always moſt ready to believe calumny, and ſhew the greateſt reluctance to ſee thoſe whom they have offended.

Prejudice, however, is ſo common, that many recommendations are wanted to determine a man in office in favour of any perſon; but there needs one word only to make him change, or to provoke him. This is the ſtrongeſt proof of the depravity of the human heart.

We ſhould be obliged to ſee nobody, were we to ſhut our doors againſt all who have been ill ſpoken of. We ought to be very careful

to

to avoid judging raſhly. It is ſhameful to paſs ſentence againſt our brother, when we have not ſufficient proofs to accuſe him.

Many think they ought piouſly to give credit to all the evil which is ſpoken of their neighbour. They pretend to be ignorant that God hath expreſsly commanded us not to judge, leſt we be judged; and that it is leſs criminal in his eyes, to commit faults which we repent of, than to accuſe our brethren raſhly.

The firſt rule of Chriſtian charity is to believe no ill, if we have not ſeen it; and not to publiſh it, if we have ſeen it. Beſides, if he whom they would prevent you from ſeeing, ſeeks the ſociety of good people, it is a proof he is not ſuch a libertine as they pretend, or that he is inclined to reform. Perhaps his ſalvation depends upon the good example you will ſet him; therefore I would not have you reject him.

Charity does not judge like the world; becauſe the world almoſt never fails to judge amiſs.

LETTER XI.

THE giving of alms is not ſufficient to pleaſe God, for charity extends over all; you ſhould not oppreſs your tenants, nor moleſt your vaſſals: they who with the greateſt ſeverity exact trifles, which they ought to deſpiſe, have not a proper ſenſe of religion. Chriſtianity is unacquainted with that ſordid intereſt which is attentive to little things; and they have only the bark who are always upon the watch with their tenants, for fear of being cheated. The heart is become too earthly, when it is over-anxious about worldly matters.

Why torment yourſelf ſo ſolicitouſly about the things that periſh? The kingdom of Jeſus Chriſt ſhould have worſhippers in ſpirit and in truth, whoſe hearts are not contracted by a ſelf-intereſted conduct, and views merely carnal.

I am troubled when I ſee people of fortune living in dread of want, and, though very rich, often much more attached to a dirty piece of gold than a poor labourer would be.

I dare add, Sir, that all your works of devotion will be abſolutely uſeleſs, if you do not detach yourſelf entirely from the things of this world; and ceaſe to be the tyrant of your debtors, by a greedineſs after riches. It is better to forego a right, than to recover it by oppreſſion. The ſpirit of juſtice, which you plead in your favour, has no connection with

continual

continual diſtruſt, with apprehenſions about fu-ture want, and frequent wranglings.

If there are ſome diſputes between you and your tenants, ſettle them more to their advantage than your own; it is conformable to the advice of Jeſus Chriſt, who orders us, if they aſk our cloak, to give our coat alſo. All your ſuperfluities, and even a part of your neceſſaries, on urgent occaſions, belong to the poor; ſo that you will be guilty if you accumulate. Theſe are harſh truths, but the law was not made by me.

LETTER XII.

AT ſight of the ideas, with which you have filled the work which you have communicated to me, my thoughts upon that ſubject were rouſed, and, according to my ſlender abilities, I formed an idea of man, ſuch as he is, and ſuch as he ought to be. I ſee him at one and the ſame time, ſo little, and ſo great; ſo weak, and ſo ſtrong; that I have been at once, both vain and exceſſively humbled.

Man preſents himſelf under ſo many different aſpects, he unites ſo many contradictions, that he muſt neceſſarily appear to be a creature entirely celeſtial, or a being entirely animal. By his

his ſoul, he ſtands in the moſt glorious and intimate relation to the Deity. By his body, in the moſt humbling and moſt ſtriking manner doth he participate in non-entity. In the firſt view, he is a light which delights by its purity; in the ſecond, a night which terrifies by its darkneſs.

Chriſtianity, ſecure from every deſtructive ſhoal, by always keeping a juſt medium, points out to us man upon earth, and in the boſom of God, as in a double centre, whence we iſſued, and to which we muſt return.

The looks which every infant raiſes to heaven from the moment of its birth, the tears with which it bedews its cradle, in a ſtriking manner prove its origin to be at once terreſtrial and divine. If its ſoul, like a budding flower, expands by inſenſible degrees, the reaſon is, that it depends upon a body ſluggiſh in its progreſſions.

At laſt, the time comes when reaſon pierces its way, and at firſt is only a ſpark, which either kindles a deſtructive flame, or produces a lively and beneficial light, according to the manner in which it is guided, and the objects to which it is attached. I ſpeak here of the paſſions, the appetites, and education, which are ſo many influences acting upon man, with different degrees of vigour. If ſenſible things acquire dominion over him, he becomes the miſerable ſlave of every ſurrounding object; if on the contrary, he be governed by ſpiritual

things;

things, he is monarch of himſelf, and his reaſon ſhines forth in all its luſtre. Then God always appears preſent to him, and the creatures are in his eyes only periſhable bleſſings, which he muſt uſe as if he uſed them not.

We ought to regard, as a particular bleſſing of Providence, the happineſs of being born under a government which rectifies our thoughts, and in the boſom of a family which inſtructs us in the principles of virtue.

One thing is certain, that every man, in whatever region he may be born, owes a duty to God, to his neighbour, and to his country: if he be only a private citizen, he ought to ſtrive, by his labour and his talents, to render himſelf uſeful to the community.

If of an elevated rank, he owes a tribute to the publick, which muſt be paid, either by his application to affairs, or by his beneficence.

The man converſant with himſelf, lives almoſt perpetually in an enemy's country: boiling blood, a wandering imagination, contradictory deſires, fiery paſſions, raiſe an inteſtine war, often attended with ſad conſequences.

He who deſires to guide himſelf by the rules of wiſdom, muſt paſs his life in a continual ſtruggle: for in us there are two men, the terreſtrial and the ſpiritual, who are inceſſantly at war, and agree only when enlightened reaſon is the pilot; and an upright heart the helm.

Each of us ought to erect a throne to the Deity, in his own heart; otherwise it becomes a chaos, without order or symmetry.

The soul, surrounded by the senses, resembles a king encircled by his guards; but if this sentinel suffers himself to be forced, and be not attentive to repulse those vices that would usurp the sovereignty, and make themselves masters of the place, then doth man groan in the most cruel anarchy.

Hence comes it, that materialists and vicious men are so numerous. The germ of immortality is choaked, and the soul is utterly disregarded, while they blindly follow the torrent of the passions. In vain doth she employ the voice of her faithful monitor, conscience. They withdraw from her the obedience which is her due; and openly treat as a chimera, that purely intellectual substance, which may be justly called the mother of our thoughts, of our reasonings, and our affections.

It was necessary that man should be at the same time terrestrial and spiritual, in order to answer his destination, according to the will of the Deity. Without a body he could not have enjoyed the material world, of which he was to be an inhabitant; without a soul, he would have been incapable of the knowledge and possession of his Creator. As a mixed being, he is at once subordinate to the elements, and superior to the universe.

Without

Without man, the earth is only a vaſt deſart; let us give it a juſter epithet, it is only a grave: it requires his hand for its cultivation; his ſociety to be inhabited; ſo that, with reaſon ſhe looks up to him as her maſter and ſovereign. Accordingly ſhe is attentive to acknowledge his ſupremacy and his care, by offering him, according to the courſe of the ſeaſons, the moſt beautiful flowers, and the moſt excellent fruits.

The misfortune is, that this man, whom the earth obeys as her king, leaves marks of his crimes and errors; there is no country which has not been bedewed with bloodſhed, by hatred or fanaticiſm, by love or ambition. The virtues have never appeared in the world but like flaſhes of lightning, which ſhine and diſappear in the boſom of the ſtorms.

Yet, perhaps, man is not ſo malignant as is imagined: idleneſs leads him into more exceſſes than perverſity. Opportunities of doing miſchief riſe in crowds round the man who is unemployed; I pretend not to paint man ſuch as he is, but I have ſaid enough to give a juſt idea of him, and oblige him to own, that when he unites himſelf to God, he is a whole, but when ſeparated from him, nothing.

Reaſon, without religion, like thoſe luminous exhalations which riſe in the boſom of night, enlighten only to guide to the brink of ſome precipice. This age offers the moſt ſorrowful examples of it! This age, which, notwithſtanding the wit and knowledge with which it

is decorated, seems to forget God himself, in order to pursue and adore phantoms.

Great part of mankind are mere abortions; they either cramp their heart by attaching it only to perishable objects, or stifle their understanding by employing it only in useless pursuits. Even the most sublime sciences are below the dignity of our souls, if they lead us not up to the Deity, their principle and end.

These misfortunes have their source in man's not being sufficiently sensible of the excellence of his soul, in his placing his vanity in what can only humble him, in his being defiled with the spots of sin. Death, which awaits him from the moment of his entrance into the world, can alone make him perfectly comprehend the importance of rising above all objects of sense; but death warns us not of our errors, until the time for correcting them is no more. We imagine ourselves still in our cradle while he is opening our tomb, and casting us into it in the midst of our projects. It is inconceivable with what a rapid course the moments flow from our birth to our death. I compare them to a flash of lightning, which issues from a cloud, again to enter its bosom; so that, in a figurative sense, we may say, man is born and dies in the space of a single day. His birth is the dawn, his infancy the morning, his manhood the meridian, and his death the evening. Then all objects really disappear from him, and eternal night overwhelms him in darkness; unless

he

he be illuminated by that uncreated light with which the juſt ſhall be filled.

This great object man ought to keep inceſſantly in view; if he would be what he ought, let him repreſent to himſelf Death, holding the fatal urn, in which all generations are reduced to duſt. This is the ſpectacle on which we muſt fix our eyes, if we would live like Chriſtian philoſophers. Thus man, here below, is only a ſhadow, which muſt paſs away; if we would entertain a high idea of him, he muſt be contemplated in eternity. It is, doubtleſs, a more glorious object than the firmament itſelf, to behold at its birth and its death that worm, called man, paſs even into the boſom of God, at the moment when the earth crumbles under his feet, and a temporal life is taken from him, that it may make room for one entirely divine.

It is aſtoniſhing that this man, brought into the world for ſo great purpoſes, ſhould be ſo incurious to know them, and ſhould incorporate himſelf with the vileſt and moſt worthleſs objects, while he is expected in another world to be eſſentially united with the Deity himſelf.

I am ſenſible that the night of the grave is a chaos which we cannot unravel while we languiſh in this valley of tears.

It is a gulph in which all our reaſon is loſt, and which to us will be for ever unknown till ſeen. Every time we ſee a man diſappear, to go into the region of the dead, we ought to be

aſſured

assured that then all the faculties of his soul acquire an activity which serves to make him feel, in an ineffable manner, his eternal happiness or misery. Man passes into the other life as he came into this, without knowing in what country he is landed.

When we have lost sight of this world, to which we were accustomed, another presents itself, but so extraordinary and so sublime, as to bear no relation to the present.

In vain do we apply to the sciences, to raise us to the uncreated being. This life, properly speaking, is only the life of the body, so severe is the tyranny of our appetites and of our wants, but the future life is entirely that of the soul. There will it blossom, as in its proper soil; it will no more be clogged with a mass of flesh, which retarded all its operations, and so confounded it with terrestrial objects, that we would have suffered ourselves to be captivated by them, had not care been taken to silence the passions. Thus must we re-unite the present with the future, the earth with heaven; in a word, this world with the other, in order to be thoroughly acquainted with man; for, in fact, he so appertains to the present and the future life, that we only have a shadow of him if we do not follow him beyond the tomb. There he is expected, that he may come to the full knowledge of his greatness; and there he will see himself like a new Phœniz, rise resplendent from his ashes; then will he

he learn, that his deſtiny was to live in the Being of Beings.

Were man attentive to contemplate himſelf here below, in the view of what he is to be at his death; he would wiſh to hear frequent mention made of that happy moment when he ſhall be ſtripped of this miſerable life, which retards his glory and felicity.

Death, from which we have ſo great averſion, is notwithſtanding the brighteſt and moſt glorious moment to man, if while on this earth, he hath faithfully fulfilled his taſk according to the laws preſcribed by religion. I form to myſelf the good man, in his dying moments, like the ſun, which, after being covered by a thick cloud, at laſt pierces through the ſhades and miſts, and ſhines forth with double luſtre. The wants and paſſions of this life are ſo many clouds which darken us, and hide even from our own eyes our dignity and our faculties.

I am not ſurprized, that to the Chriſtian philoſophers, death was a continual ſubject of meditation. When rightly viewed, it offers to mankind nothing but what is great, nothing but what is cheering. But we judge of it only by the ſepulchral horrors; that is, by what has a relation ſolely to our body, and then it appears to us the moſt frightful ſpectacle.

This occaſioned the ſaying of Sir Charles Borromeo, ‘ That if death was the body's ‘ enemy, it was the ſoul's good friend, and that

' that man did not underſtand his own intereſts ' when he did not wiſh for it.'

Ought that moment, which will crown us with glory and happineſs, to be an object of our hatred? The body is a frail building, which muſt neceſſarily be demoliſhed, that the ſoul may fly to its centre. It is like thoſe ſcaffolds which architects uſe for the conſtruction of a palace, but which they remove when the pile is completed.

It is not to be doubted, that the reproaches of conſcience ordinarily give riſe to this exceſſive fear of death. Doubtleſs it is awful by reaſon of the ever inſcrutable judgments of God; but he is mercy itſelf. He deſireth not the death of a ſinner, and aſſures us that, when we return ſincerely to him, he will forget all our iniquities, were they numerous as the ſand of the ſea.

In the eyes of faith, death, far from being the deſtruction of man, is a ſecond creation much more wonderful than the firſt; becauſe, inſtead of thoſe miſeries with which we have been beſet from our birth, we ſhall find, in dying, conſolations, and bleſſings ' Which the ' eye hath not ſeen, nor the ear heard, nor ' hath it entered into the heart of man to con- ' ceive.'

LETTER XIII.

YOU have often ſolicited me to compoſe a Treatiſe on the *Church*; but, terrified by the boundleſs extent of the ſubject, I drop the pencil from my hands every time I attempt to ſketch that magnificent picture.

When I reflect that God himſelf, by his word and ſpirit, has begotten the church, in order to make of her a ſecond heaven, much more luminous than the firſt; and has given her his glory and holineſs, to ſerve as a guiding light through all ages and nations. I feel my courage forſake me, and my very exiſtence abſorbed in gratitude and adoration. This church we ſhall not know perfectly till we are in the boſom of God, from whom ſhe is an emanation, and to whom, as to her ſupreme happineſs, ſhe inceſſantly tends. The world is a veil here below, which hides from us her brightneſs; and it muſt neceſſarily be rent and diſappear, that we may behold that divine church in all her beauty and all her immenſity. How many men, powerful in word and in deed, between Adam and the laſt of men, who ſhall complete the myſterious ring in which will be comprehended all the celeſtial ſpirits and all the ſaints! This is, truly, that innumerable multitude mentioned in the Apocalypſe, which John ſaw in the midſt of an ineffable rapture.

In

In a myſtical ſenſe, the church is an exact counterpart of the material world; ſhe is continually vivified by a central and divine fire; enlightened by a ſun, even in the middle of the night; endowed with a fertility which makes her bud and bring forth fruit for time and for eternity: watered with a miraculous dew, by which, like nature, ſhe is at once embelliſhed and refreſhed: ſhe has her diamonds, her pearls, her metals, her plants, her flowers.

All the works of God are connected by ſo cloſe relations, in ſuch perfect harmony, that the corporeal aids the ſpiritual, the viſible is united with the inviſible, in order to form a whole, which bleſſes its Creator, and proclaims his excellence and majeſty.

Every private perſon in the church has his peculiar opinions with regard to religion, every ſect its characteriſtick doctrine; but in the holy ſociety, there is only *one faith*, *one ſalvation*, *one baptiſm*.

LETTER XIV.

Written in illneſs to a Friend.

I AM truly very ill, but what comforts me is, that it is not of my own ſeeking, for I always thought, that every man ſhould be careful of his health.

Ignorant

Ignorant devotion will not agree in this truth; however, there is no doubt, that by deſtroying the ſprings of life, we put it out of our power to diſcharge our duties.

Sickneſs, when it is not an effect produced by ſome exceſs, but is ſent directly from God, is the moſt proper penitence to expiate our ſins and errors. It ſcatters a wholeſome bitterneſs over the pleaſures of this life; it ſhades the objects which ſeem to dazzle us; it inſenſibly detaches us from whatever is mortal, and makes us familiar with death.

I have never been ſo ſenſible of my own inſignificance, as ſince the beginning of my illneſs; I have ſeen that my body is only an edifice which tumbles to pieces when leaſt expected. Sometimes my diſorder is acute, and ſometimes it ſeems to ſleep, but it is only to wake with double violence.

Man, from the moment of his birth, becomes expoſed to all kinds of infirmities and accidents, and may look upon every thing around him as the immediate cauſe of his ruin. When the body becomes weak, the ſoul ſhould ſeem to leave it to be united more cloſely with God, which is the only means of riſing ſuperior to pains and ſufferings, for all poſſible happineſs is to be found in God.

LETTER XV.

YOUR correſpondent is now reduced to a ſtate of great weakneſs, and employing his emaciated fingers in writing to you. Had I viewed only the glory of this world, I would have ſaid to death, when he preſented to me the cup of bitterneſs, *Let that cup paſs from me.* But happily my thoughts were entirely taken up with heaven, and I exclaimed to myſelf, *How pleaſing is this cup!*

It is certain that in the eyes of faith there is no greater bleſſing than to unite ourſelves to death, before he ſtrikes the laſt blow. Since I feel him within me, and draw him in with my breath, he ſeems diſarmed of his terrors, and while my days diminiſh, they become more valuable, by bringing me nearer to eternity.

Here the violence of my pains obliges me to lay down my pen—I know not when, or if ever I ſhall reſume it.

A moment's eaſe, after ſeven days and nights of continual pain, puts the pen again into my hand. One thing comforts me, that by the favour of heaven my mind acquires ſtrength as my body decays, and there is only one thing that gives me real affliction. I have not done all the good I ought to have done, for which reaſon I earneſtly intreat you to pray to God, that he would pardon me, and deign to accept my

ſmall

ſmall remains of life, as an expiation for my ſins.

I die as I lived with gratitude to all who have done me ſervice, and always your friend.—Forget me in the ſight of men, before whom I ſhall ſoon be only a portion of duſt, but remember me before God, in whom I have reſted all my hope, that I may not be covered with confuſion in eternity.

It has been his will to ſhew me, in a dreadful manner, the nothingneſs of grandeur, even when I was ſurrounded with it, by mixing for me a cup of gall and wormwood. Bleſſed be his name.

If I have not the conſolation of ſeeing you here, I ſhall expect you in eternity, where I hope we ſhall enjoy the invaluable bleſſing of meeting again in God, who will then be our univerſe, our element, and our life.

This 26th of Auguſt, 1774.

FINIS.

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